

Aged care overhaul needed for older adults living with extreme obesity

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New research led by Victoria University of Wellington researchers shows New Zealand's aged care sector will be under pressure unless more support is provided to a growing older population living with obesity. It also highlights the potential for older adults living with obesity to be stigmatised.

The research, led by Dr. Caz Hales and Dr. Helen Rook from the University's Faculty of Health, studied three aged care facilities across the North Island to assess how prepared the sector is to care for older adults with [obesity](#).

"Twenty four percent of adults over the age of 75 are currently identified as living with obesity, with one percent identified with extreme obesity. More residents are also living with being overweight, with obesity, or extreme obesity than are underweight in aged care facilities," says Dr. Hales. "However, little work has been done to analyse how [aged care facilities](#) can support these residents."

Their research found that, while facilities were willing to care for these residents, there were significant barriers preventing them from providing an equitable service.

"Facilities did not have the right equipment, spaces, or training needed to support these residents," says Dr. Hales. "The processes for admitting residents to these facilities were also reported as fraught with issues. These barriers cause problems for the residents, for the carers in these

facilities, and for the system as a whole."

"There is a high degree of compassion and a willingness to provide care, but changes need to be made in order to avoid increased [financial burden](#) on the sector and on residents and their families, an under-resourced workforce, and stigmatisation of people living with obesity," says Dr. Hales.

Recommendations from their research include a Ministry of Health review of the capacity of the aged care sector and the development of standards and an infrastructure strategy for the sector, a District Health Board review of the transition process from hospitals to care facilities, and a sector review of processes, including emergency procedures, in order to make changes.

"We think that it is critical for the delivery of equitable care for [older adults](#) with extreme obesity that all sectors continue to work collaboratively together to develop pragmatic and person-centred solutions," says Dr. Rook.

More information: Aged residential care needs of older adults with extreme obesity: www.victoria.ac.nz/_data/asse..._eme-Report_Final.pdf

Provided by Victoria University of Wellington

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