Examining SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks in care homes for the elderly and disabled in Germany

4 November 2022

The introduction of COVID-19 vaccination and additional pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical measures helped to notably reduce the extent and severity of SARS-CoV-19 outbreaks in care homes for elderly and disabled people in Germany. This is according to a recent study reported by Dunja Said, Beneditta Suwono, and co-authors in Deutsches Ärzteblatt International.

The authors investigated in their comparative epidemiological analysis of the time periods before and after the start of the vaccination campaign 7794 outbreaks with 177 696 outbreak cases in care homes. 74.6% of the age group was 60 or older. The case-fatality rate among outbreak cases was 14.5%. The size and severity were compared for the following phases of the pandemic: phase 1, the period before vaccinations had been introduced; phase 2: start of the vaccination campaigns; phase 3: the period from which a majority of the residents had been fully initially immunized. From phases 1 to 3, the median number of cases/outbreaks fell from 21 to 8. The case-fatality rate fell from 15.7% to 10.0%.

The researchers recommend that the pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical measures implemented in care homes should continue to be used in future, so as to prevent severe disease courses in residents. This comprises in particular a higher rate of complete vaccination, a more stringent implementation of recommendations for vaccine boosters, and the simultaneous adherence to high hygiene standards.

More information: Dunja Said et al, SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks in care homes for the elderly and disabled in Germany—a comparative epidemiological analysis of the periods before and after the beginning of the vaccination campaign, Deutsches Ärzteblatt International (2022). DOI: 10.3238/arztebl.m2022.0170

Provided by Deutsches Ärzteblatt International