

TITLE

Supporting carers to help manage breakthrough symptoms safely using subcutaneous medicines for home-based palliative care patients during the COVID-19 pandemic

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AIM

The aim of this project was to produce and disseminate augmented *caring@home* carer packages as a resource for service providers, to not only provide patient-centred care, but also limit risks of community COVID-19 transmission.

The 'regular' *caring@home* package contains resources that have been used extensively by Australian health professionals to support carers to help manage breakthrough symptoms safely using subcutaneous medicines for a terminally ill person who wishes to remain in their home environment.

The augmented *caring@home* package contains the regular *caring@home* package for carers plus new resources in an Emergency COVID-19 pack.

APPROACH

New resources were developed for the Emergency COVID-19 package to enable health professionals to teach volunteer carer(s) how to insert a subcutaneous cannula and how to give a subcutaneous injection using remote communication (e.g. telehealth or telephone).

The augmented *caring@home* packages were freely available to clinical services across Australia and were promoted through existing communication networks.

RESULTS

The Emergency COVID-19 pack consisted of:

- A starter pack of clinical items for training and practise
- Step-by-step guides and videos about how to insert a cannula and how to give a subcutaneous injection
- Information sheets for health professionals and carers

Between April and July 2020, 9,983 augmented *caring@home* packages were distributed to all states and territories in Australia, across metropolitan, regional and remote areas and to specialist and generalist services.

Anecdotal feedback from clinicians and families indicated the resources were very favourably received.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 presents an unprecedented challenge for patients, carers and health professionals. The Emergency COVID-19 pack is an extraordinary response that supports the goals of palliative care and helps to limit COVID-19 exposure.

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