Best Practices in Infection, Prevention and Control for Senior Living Facilities

The COVID-19 Pandemic has revealed the many challenges and tragedies of virulent infections. Most of us are aware that since the beginning of time we have been sharing this planet with microorganisms capable of irreparable harm and death to human beings. Though the human carnage of COVID-19 has not been witnessed in over 100 years, each year tens of thousands of people die from the flu and other infections.

COVID-19 has specifically highlighted the need for infection prevention and control in shared communal living environments. We all know, senior care communities have fallen under greater scrutiny and are at greater risk for the deadly spread of infections.

To prevent, control, and reduce infections, we need to focus on people. Not only are people at the greatest risk for suffering and death, people are also the greatest form and source of transmission. This is especially true in our modern world of fast, easy cross-communal and cultural travel. Our efforts need to focus on preventing people from infecting and being infected. Therefore, considering the people who live in, work in and visit senior living communities, using best practices in Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) is a must.

We have heard too many sad stories of COVID-19 having a devastating impact on long-term care and assisted living facilities.

Culture

More than regulatory compliance, this is about leadership and philosophy.

People are at the greatest risk and are the biggest source of transmission.

Senior living communities need to create a culture with clear lines of accountability, transparency and create an environment of improvement:

- Improving communication
- Improving teamwork
- Improving culture

Roles must be clearly defined and supported by all members of the community. IPC Champions need to be identified, have access to resources, along with responsibilities. A positive culture needs to be safe and supportive for all stakeholders.

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Education

Education should be fun, encouraged, and accessible for all. This requires regular, ongoing education of all members of the community: leadership, front-line care staff, support staff, residents, their families, and visitors.

- Clear onboarding for all new members: administrators, staff, residents, and their families.
- Easy to read, clear, supportive resources in multiple locations and mediums: handouts, emails, contests, quizzes, bingo, and more.
- Education needs to include prevention and control – hand hygiene, isolation, PPE use, etc. Use checklists and rewards to embed consistent use.
- Peer-to-peer knowledge transfers should be supported during regularly scheduled work and ongoing community learning moments.

Surveillance

Effectively monitoring for signs of infection will help establish a proactive approach. Accurate, timely information that is based on strong, consistent, clinical (care) observation will lead to greater transparency. This should become second nature for all members of the community: front line care staff, support staff, leadership, residents, families, and visitors. Through ongoing surveillance, you will establish baselines, identify areas of success and problem areas, and improvement opportunities.

Prevention And Control

COVID-19 has put contact tracing in the spotlight. This along with effective isolation are critical tools in the prevention and control of infection outbreaks. Seemingly simple, contact tracing becomes complicated and time-consuming very quickly. Whether you use a paper-based process or some form of technology, contact tracing is a must at this time. Beyond contact tracing, environmental and person hygiene, physical distancing, PPE usage, vaccine education, and support all work together to form a framework of prevention and control.

Our **Nxtgen Care COVID-19** feature suite captures thousands of data points to provide real-time contact tracing and unprecedented healthcare intelligence.

Visit our website to learn more:
nxtgencare.com/solutions/covid-19

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