

Report on an in-service workshop supporting Residential Care Facilities (RCF) to manage outbreaks of infectious diseases.

Benjamin Aniugbo¹, Grainne O'Kane¹, Cheryl McGauran¹, Kathleen Dunne¹, Orla Cotter¹, Andrea King¹, Fiona McGuire¹

Public Health Area B¹

Background/Goal

Residents in older person facilities are disproportionately affected by outbreaks of infectious diseases such as COVID-19 and influenza due to vulnerabilities based on age, co-morbidities and living in congregate settings. Information and effective communication is key to supporting residential care facilities (RCF) to prepare for, prevent and control infectious disease outbreaks. Anecdotal experiences of our health protection team highlighted the challenges for RCF managers keeping abreast of public health guidance updates on prevention and management of Cases and outbreaks of COVID-19, Influenza and other Respiratory Infections. As part of winter planning, the RCF managers were engaged through workshop. Our aim was to proactively empower RCFs on the practical applications of the guidance in response to outbreak of infectious diseases in their settings. This was to enable greater autonomy for RCFs managers in planning and implementing outbreak measures.

Activities/Method

The in-service workshop comprised of presentations by PH multidisciplinary team on winter preparedness, respiratory outbreak management, Healthcare worker (HCW) vaccination and finished with table top exercises on outbreak scenarios.

Result

Pre- and post – knowledge assessment evaluation was completed. The greatest knowledge gains for the attendees were on influenza outbreak management, chemoprophylaxis and respiratory testing strategy. All the attendees agreed that they would use the knowledge gain to implement local changes such updating policies and procedures, staff information and education, introducing infection control drills and reviewing internal COVID-19 and influenza outbreak plans.

Conclusion

Author: Benjamin Aniugbo, Health Protection Nurse Manager, Public Health Area B.
Benjamin.aniugbo@hse.ie

The interventions demonstrated that timely education and training supports facilitated by PH enabled and empowered managers to take ownership for planning, preparation for and managing outbreaks prior to surge activity.