

Dental Research at Woollahra Manor



Study participant, resident Millie Mass

Montefiore is delighted to announce that a new dental research study is being conducted at Woollahra Manor. Montefiore continually strives to provide exceptional standards of service and care to its residents.

Residents in nursing homes are not usually seen by dentists for dental treatment or preventive services on a regular basis. Residents may see a dentist only for emergency pain relief, often some years after entry into a home, by which time there may be many decayed teeth and advanced oral disease. Often only extractions or palliative care is possible. Where co-operation is poor, (in dementia) even simple treatment may not be possible.

The aim of the study is to determine whether nurses can accurately assess the oral health of residents and create individualised preventive oral health care plans within the resident's first few weeks of entry into a nursing home. The study is a collaboration between the Montefiore Dental Clinic, the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre (DCRC), the Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing (CHeBA), the University of NSW, the Centre for Education in Ageing (CERA, Concord Hospital) and Sydney University.

The study began on 28 January with ten residents participating.

Other residents are encouraged to participate and there are no costs in joining the study. Implementation is well on its way. Four nursing staff at Montefiore's Woollahra Manor have received special education and training related to oral health assessment and preventive dental maintenance. These staff members were then involved in assessing oral health and salivary markers in the participating residents. Information gained during this process was used to inform the development of an individualised care plan for each resident. Nurses developed oral care plans under the supervision of a dental professional. Advanced oral care plans were then implemented as a supplement to the resident's regular oral care routine for a 10 to 12 week study period. Plans involved a range of non-invasive preventative interventions. Following the study period, residents' oral health and salivary markers will be assessed again to examine any changes in oral health status. If the care plans are found to be effective, another multi-centre study based on these outcomes will be run in the future.

The benefits to residents who undertake the study is that their oral health will be more closely monitored over the course of the study period and existing oral problems will be detected early. Earlier management

of dental problems will avoid pain and possibly more complex treatment in the future. Advanced oral care plans should have a positive effect in improving the oral and general health of residents and decrease the risk of future disease.

Executive Care Manager, Woollahra Manor, Natalie Bolel said, "The study has been an educational learning curve, and an enlightening and engaging experience for both staff and residents. To evaluate as succinctly as possible; I think that we have learned that the compartmentalisation involved in examining the mouth separately from the rest of the body should cease. Poor oral health affects general health by causing considerable pain and suffering. This study has raised awareness amongst staff and residents of interventions available to improve oral health and therefore residents' wellbeing."

Dr Alan Deutsch, dentist overseeing the study said, "The residents of Montefiore are fortunate to have innovative and dedicated management and staff willing to lend their time, resources and skill to allow our study to take place. Montefiore recognises how good oral health impacts general health and the quality of life of residents in their care."

Feedback on the study has been positive. Residents and staff have welcomed the study and shown great interest in it.

'I think that we have learned that the compartmentalisation involved in examining the mouth separately from the rest of the body should cease.'