

COVID-19 existing resource response #17

(Last updated: 16 February 2022)

Question

What is the best-available synthesized evidence in relation to addressing key issues related to care for older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic?

What we found

We searched the COVID-END [inventory of best evidence syntheses](#) and the COVID-END domestic inventory on 10 February 2022 to identify evidence documents focused on addressing the following key issues related to caring for older adults:

- crisis management and renewal in the long-term care sector;
- related crises in home and community care (e.g., not wanting visits), primary care (e.g., missed visits), specialty care (e.g., postponed procedures), rehab care (e.g., missed visits);
- related crisis in mental health, cancer, and palliative care;
- vaccine access;
- social isolation, sleep disruptions, food and other shopping, and family conflict; and
- challenges with using technology that enhances person-centred care for older adults and their caregivers in LTC settings and helps older adults age at home for as long as possible while also addressing issues of isolation.

We used the following combination of search terms to identify relevant documents: older adult* OR senior* OR frail OR elder* OR older people OR aged care.

We identified 12 evidence documents that provide insights about the question (listed in Table 1), which include:

- two living reviews;
- three full systematic reviews;
- three rapid reviews;
- four other types of documents (an evidence brief, living evidence profile, health technology review and a briefing note).

The evidence documents focus on topics related to crisis management and renewal in the long-term care sector (two living reviews, one full systematic review, two rapid reviews and four other

Box 1: Our approach

COVID-END in Canada responds to requests for evidence syntheses about topics related to COVID-19 that are likely to be explicitly considered by high-level decision-makers in multiple Canadian jurisdictions. This includes conducting rapid evidence profiles, living evidence profiles, rapid syntheses and living evidence syntheses. Examples of these evidence products can be viewed [here](#).

Sometimes requests are submitted about questions that have already been addressed by one or more recently updated, high-quality evidence syntheses, or will be addressed soon by work underway (e.g., through a rapid synthesis underway with or being planned by a Canadian team, registered synthesis protocol or CIHR funding to conduct a synthesis). Other times all the requestor needs is a list of available evidence syntheses undertaken by COVID-END in Canada partners or COVID-END global partners. In these situations, we prepare a response that profiles these existing resources. These responses are typically prepared by a combination of: 1) searching both the COVID-END domestic inventory and the COVID-END global inventory; and 2) contacting 40+ Canada evidence-synthesis teams to identify any additional resources or work underway that is relevant to the question posed in a request. Such an existing resource response is equivalent to a rapid evidence profile prepared with the same turnaround time.

We followed this approach to prepare this existing resource response, which was prepared in one business day (and hence the equivalent to a two-days rapid evidence profile) to inform next steps in evidence synthesis, guideline development and/or decision-making related to the question that was posed.

documents), related crises in other sectors (one full systematic review) and social isolation (one full systematic review and one rapid review). Three of these documents addressed multiple topics from the list above with two being relevant to long-term care crisis management and technology use and one focusing on social isolation and technology use.

Of the documents addressing long-term care, the two living reviews focus on [outbreaks, infections and mortality in different forms of ownership of long-term care homes](#) and on [mortality and spread of disease in long-term care homes](#). A full systematic review also examined clinical features of COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care homes, while two rapid reviews evaluated [risk mitigation strategies](#) and [measures to protect older adults in long-term care homes](#). Two of the other types of documents ([findings from national stakeholder dialogue and series of citizen panels](#), and a [briefing document](#)) address both long-term care crisis management and challenges with using technology that enhances person-centred care. The two other types of documents profile the evidence about [what is known in relation to crisis management and renewal in long-term care](#) and [maintaining communication with essential care partners](#).

For social isolation, one full systematic review analyzed [isolation, loneliness and impact on quality of life in older adults during COVID-19 lockdowns](#) and the rapid review examined the use of [video calls for reducing isolation and loneliness](#). Lastly, one full systematic assessed a topic of relevance to home care and community care with a focus on [home-based exercise programs](#).

Table 1: Hyperlinked titles to evidence documents with insights about key issues related to the care for older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic

Evidence type	Evidence documents identified
Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified
Living reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership and COVID-19 in care homes for older people: A living systematic review of outbreaks, infections, and mortalities (AMSTAR rating 8/10; literature last searched 26 January 2021) • COVID-19 related mortality and spread of disease in long-term care: a living systematic review of emerging evidence (AMSTAR rating 7/10; literature last search 26 June 2020)
Full systematic reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life in lockdown: Social isolation, loneliness and quality of life in the elderly during the COVID-19 pandemic: A scoping review (AMSTAR rating 4/9; literature last searched 1 March 2021) • Home-based exercise programmes improve physical fitness of healthy older adults: A PRISMA-compliant systematic review and meta-analysis with relevance for COVID-19 (AMSTAR rating 6/11; literature last searched 20 December 2020) • Epidemiology and clinical features of COVID-19 outbreaks in aged care facilities: A systematic review and meta-analysis (AMSTAR rating 9/11; literature last searched 28 September 2020)
Rapid reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies mitigate risk of COVID-19 outbreaks and mortality in long-term care facilities? (AMSTAR rating 8/10; literature last searched 1 February 2021) • A rapid systematic review of measures to protect older people in long term care facilities from COVID-19 (AMSTAR rating 9/11; literature last searched 27 July 2020) • Video calls for reducing social isolation and loneliness in older people: A rapid review (AMSTAR rating 7/10; literature last searched 7 April 2020)
Protocols for reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified
Titles/questions for reviews that are being planned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified
Single studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified

Evidence type	Evidence documents identified
Other types of documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is known about supporting renewal in long-term care homes in light of the COVID-19 pandemic? (no AMSTAR rating available; literature last searched 27 October 2021) • Strategies used by long-term care facilities to maintain communication with essential care partners during a pandemic or infectious disease outbreak (health technology review; last updated 9 July 2021) • Identifying and harnessing the potential of technology in long-term care settings in Canada (evidence brief, dialogue summary, citizen brief and citizen panel summary) (no AMSTAR rating available; published 1 February 2021) • The wellbeing of residents in long-term care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic (briefing note; last updated 31 March 2021)

Wilson MG, Mansilla C, Verma J, Lavis JN. COVID-END in Canada existing resource response #17: What is the best-available synthesized evidence in relation to addressing key issues related to care for older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic? Hamilton: McMaster Health Forum, COVID-END in Canada, 16 February 2022.

To help health- and social-system leaders as they respond to unprecedented challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the McMaster Health Forum is preparing rapid evidence profiles like this one. This rapid evidence profile was supported in part by Healthcare Excellence Canada (HEC). HEC is an independent, not-for-profit charity funded primarily by Health Canada; the views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of Health Canada. Those preparing and/or contributing to this report disclaim all liability or warranty of any kind, whether express or implied.



>> Contact us

c/o McMaster Health Forum
1280 Main St. West, M5M 4L7
Hamilton, ON, Canada L8S 4L6
+1.905.525.9140 x 22121
forum@mcmaster.ca

>> Find and follow us

COVID-END.org
@COVID_E_N_D