

Long-term care in Denmark and COVID-19

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The pandemic in Denmark

- ▶ General population:
 - ▶ Only a slightly higher excess mortality due to COVID-19 in Denmark.
 - ▶ 12.978 tested positive, 607 deaths (July 6th)
 - ▶ COVID-19 related death rate around 5%.
- ▶ Nursing home population:
 - ▶ 42.000 residents, 12.1% of 80+, apartment type nursing homes, mainly public
 - ▶ The share of nursing home residents among COVID-19 confirmed deaths is 35%.
 - ▶ COVID-19 related death rate of 35.8%
 - ▶ Approx. 0.5% of all the deaths occurring in nursing homes has been confirmed to be due to COVID-19.

Measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the LTC sector - and the challenges

- ▶ Overall:
 - ▶ Consistent political focus on protecting the most vulnerable in society. Generally strong public support for LTC sector
 - ▶ Measures focused on nursing homes
 - ▶ Late statistics on break out in nursing homes (end-April). No statistics on break-out among home care recipients
 - ▶ Continuously changing information on pandemic as evidence changed
 - ▶ Recommendations required local municipalities to implement measures; resulted in variation
 - ▶ No evaluation of effectiveness of measures

PPE – Personal Protective Equipment

- ▶ Lack of PPE, so prioritized for the health care sector:
- ▶ From first case (Week 0) to Week 8 (April 23rd), social care staff recommended only to wear normal work clothes and maintain physical distance, 'turn head away'. 'Evidence-based'
- ▶ Survey from early May:
 - ▶ 1/3 of health and social care workers had been in close contact with infected users without wearing PPE. 15% did not wear PPE in general

Lock-down and isolation

- ▶ Smaller family groups
- ▶ Staff pay attention to contact with infected persons
- ▶ If (suspicion of) infection, immediate isolation of resident
- ▶ Unclear guidelines on lock-down of nursing homes. No visitors indoor (some places also outdoor). No use of communal areas. Staff gatekeepers for increasingly frustrated family members
- ▶ Criticism of social isolation and loneliness
- ▶ Ipads and social media
- ▶ 100 million DKK set of for municipalities for organizing initiatives aimed at nursing home residents and frail older people living in their own home

Testing

- ▶ LTC staff not targeted for tests.
 - ▶ Only in week 2 could staff be referred to a test, but GPs hesitant to refer.
 - ▶ From Week 8, preventive testing possible, but up to local policy/manager.
- ▶ Unclear guidelines on re-testing of residents and staff
- ▶ Despite ambitious testing program, few are today tested

Innitial key lessons

- ▶ Effectiveness of LTC measures must be evaluated alongside other measures, such as general lock-down and physical distancing
- ▶ Going too far? Preventing terminal ill and cognitive impaired persons from receiving visits
- ▶ Staff in volnurable role, as gate-keepers and in fear of spreading disease
- ▶ Lack of focus on home care sector. Local reports of services not being delivered
- ▶ Local interpretation and implementation off guidelines confusing.
- ▶ Need for regular and random testing
- ▶ Re-organisation into smaller family groups - local reports of reduced use of sleeping medication and improved well-being