Lessons Learned and Re-thinking the Future

Long-Term Care Homes During the Pandemic: On February 24, 2022, CBRCanada members participated in a live discussion to dialogue about the importance of long-term care design, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Facilitators Chantal Trudel and Soo Wong co-led conversation, as a follow-up from their February 17 webinar. This summary highlights participants’ reflections during the live discussion.

Shortcomings in Long-Term Care

More programs and services are needed to support residents. The pandemic amplified the gaps in service provision, as resource constraints and physical distancing regulations restricted access to the outdoors, and limited recreational and social programming. Insufficient services and programs

More trained registered practical nurses and personal support workers are needed to properly care for residents. During the pandemic, many residents did not receive enough personalized and attentive care (e.g., support workers unable to carry out routine assisted hygiene care with residents).

Uninviting environments

LTC homes should be designed with community in mind. LTC facilities are people’s homes, where visitors may gather. Homes must be designed to be structurally conducive to socializing. Uninviting environments (e.g., poor design layout, outdated sitting rooms, lack of children’s programming, and limited spaces to socialize) may discourage visits from residents’ family and friends.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted significant gaps in the long-term care (LTC) system. Without proper infrastructure design and staffing, LTC homes have struggled to provide the comfort, safety, and support residents require. This has resulted in many shortcomings, impacting residents’ quality of life, and staff working conditions. The following challenges were discussed by live discussion participants.

Current Design Challenges

The following images share select findings from the study, COVID-19 – Design of Long-Term Care Homes: Learning for the Future, shared during the webinar, “Long-Term Care Homes During the Pandemic” with presenters Chantal Trudel and Soo Wong.

Designing for Dignity

Long-term care homes need to be redesigned in order to better support the health and dignity of residents, visitors, and staff. Participants shared the following design recommendations during the live discussion:

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Reach out and initiate conversation with your MPP about long-term care homes in your community. Consider joining our public consultation of the Canadian Standards Association’s new standard: Operations and infection prevention and control of long-term care homes.

Check out the Seniors for Social Action initiative, run by an organization of older adults from across Ontario. This organization’s mission is to find age-friendly and respectful non-profit community-based residential alternatives to long-term care institutions. Visit their “how you can help” page, to discover ways that you can get involved.

More communal spaces for residents to encourage and support socialization.

Rounder and wider hallways, as well as cleaner exits.

Wider doorways equipped with sliding doors to promote easier access for those in wheelchairs.

Build more in-room showers and bidet toilets (reduces risk of UTIs).

Individualized lighting in each room to accommodate residents’ unique vision needs.

Round tables, as opposed to rectangle-shaped tables to better accommodate wheelchairs.

Remove carpets to improve access for those who use wheelchairs or walkers.

Replace common long-term care homes with houses that are smaller, private units to accommodate unique needs.

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