Lutheran Services: Northern Region

Lutheran Services is one of Queensland's longest-established and most diverse aged care and community service providers. It has 11 aged care sites, including five services in the North Queensland region:

- Wahroonga Aged Care, Biloela
- Cooinda Aged Care, Gympie
- Immanuel Gardens Aged Care, Buderim
- Zion Aged Care, Nundah
- Orana Aged Care, Kingaroy

The organisation offers support and accommodation for older people, young people, families, individuals living with disabilities or mental health concerns, and those experiencing domestic and family violence.

Care Manager Benita Botha has been working in the sector for two years and at Lutheran Services Immanuel Gardens Aged Care, a 145-bed site in Buderim, for the last year.

"As a Clinical Nurse, I am responsible for the clinical care of 60 residents," Benita says. "I am responsible for creating individual resident care plans and frequently reviewing them. I am also responsible for coordinating doctors' rounds and family case conferences."



PainChek
Intelligent Pain Assessment

According to Benita, many residents experience pain at some point. Timely identification of pain is essential to ensuring their quality of life.

> ***"While pain is not a 'normal' part of ageing, the prevalence of persistent pain increases with age and associated illnesses," she says. "If we can identify pain early as clinicians, we can have a positive impact on the pain management outcomes for those in our care. It also means that residents are promptly referred to their medical practitioner when current interventions are not adequately managing the resident's pain."***

Sruthi Varghese, Registered Nurse at Lutheran Services Cooinda Aged Care in Gympie, worked in aged care in the UK for more than five years and has been with Cooinda Aged Care, a 165-bed site, since October 2023.



Sruthi agrees that early intervention is crucial.

"We regularly assess the residents for any signs of pain by observing them for new agitation, restlessness, new confusion, anxiety, fear of people coming closer, change in activity levels, decreased sleep or prolonged resting," she shares.

"If we can identify and manage pain early, then we are likely to see a decrease in pain-related behaviours and improved quality of life for residents."

Implementing PainChek®

Stephanie Wilson, Regional Manager, has been with Lutheran Services for nearly a decade and has seen first-hand the organisation's journey in assessing, monitoring, and evaluating pain for residents – including the adoption of the PainChek® digital assessment solution in 2021.



She says that facilitating best-practice pain management is a collective effort across the organisation, supported by PainChek®.

"It's a team effort. We pull from expertise across our quality department, our care systems manager and industry best practice to ensure we're always at the forefront of changes that should be implemented to support resident outcomes."

"I was happy to be part of the team who both implemented and maintained staff engagement with PainChek®. I've been able to see the journey from when it was just an idea to now being part of everyday practice."

Enabling best-practice pain management

Across Lutheran Services services, PainChek® assessments are completed as part of the residents' admission process, when there is a change in a resident's condition, during wound assessments, when pain is suspected, and at least every three months as part of the review process for ongoing pain management and care planning.

Following best practice and quality standards, carers manage residents' pain with a combination of pharmacological (regular and PRN medications) and non-pharmacological interventions such as position changes, heat packs and gentle massage, exercise, and pressure-relieving interventions.

Stephanie says PainChek® allows the teams to deliver a unified pain assessment and management approach with a tool that captures verbal, non-verbal and complex pain needs. It also supports the wider organisation in meeting and exceeding Aged Care Quality Standards.

"Recent anecdotal feedback from registered staff at one of our sites confirmed the value of recent training," she shares. "A staff member reflected on how much he had improved his knowledge of the software. He thought this was a great outcome. The assessor specifically commented that this knowledge directly translated to better care."

"PainChek® has had a significant positive impact. For residents, it has shown we're able to consistently deliver targeted pain management interventions, which supports effective management of complex pain. For our staff, PainChek® provides them with a platform that easily translates what they are seeing in assessments that is then documented according to best practice. And for the site, it enables us to ensure we are not only meeting, but exceeding quality standards for pain management."

Importantly, PainChek® enables nurses like Benita and Sruthi to quickly and easily validate their observations and evaluate a resident's level of pain, regardless of the resident's ability to communicate.

"There are many variables that make the recognition and management of pain in older people challenging. PainChek® provides an assessment tool that allows an objective assessment of a resident's pain when they can't consistently verbalise their pain," Benita shares.

"PainChek® helps to determine whether the resident is in any pain. This is particularly useful if a resident is experiencing changing health conditions or recuperating from an injury." Sruthi adds. "It helps to identify the residents' pain easily, supports clinical management and therefore, increases the quality of life for residents in our care."

Facilitating continuous improvement

As well as ensuring reliable pain assessment on a day-to-day basis, PainChek® allows Stephanie and her colleagues to continuously monitor the effectiveness of approaches in supporting residents' quality of life.

“In addition, PainChek® Analytics means we can take a step back and review residents as individuals as well as a cohort and see trends across our sites,” she shares. “More specifically, we can focus on user engagement and assessment practice to ensure all residents are consistently receiving the best possible quality of care.”

“PainChek® has had a positive impact on the quality of life of residents. This technology enables staff to interpret symptoms of pain that may not have previously been picked up or verbalised. This translates to our residents being provided with specialised care sooner, and being monitored more closely to ensure both long-term and short-term pain management goals are being met.”

If you’re interested in implementing PainChek® at your facility, submit your expression of interest today.