

# The value of exercise and on-site gyms

## Why allied health in aged care is so important

**The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety highlighted the importance of active, quality, patient-centred care – which is bringing about important changes.**

While the old funding model focused on passive pain management using massage and electrotherapy, the new funding tool, AN-ACC, puts the person receiving care at the centre, focusing on individual needs and allowing for therapist-directed care based on sound clinical reasoning.

When AN-ACC was introduced, the Australian Government Department of Health stated, “Providers are required under legislation to make available allied health services to residents who need them.”

Although this has not yet been widely implemented, many aged care homes are thriving in the health and wellness space, offering services for everyone, both residents and staff.

A great example of the inclusion of health and wellness as part of overall care is Riverview Lutheran Rest Home Inc, a not-for-profit 60-bed residential aged care facility in Loxton, South Australia.

Accommodation is comprised of 40 aged care beds, a purpose-built 20-bed specialised Memory Support Unit, as well as 12 Independent Living Units and 13 Serviced Apartments.

The CEO of Riverview, Nicolle Jachmann, has a wonderful vision for a holistic, total wellbeing model, that has carried through the previous refurbishment of the site, including the creation of an open multipurpose wellness space, which also offers a kitchen and a gym.

A lifestyle team is onsite daily to deliver a variety of activities that enhance the residents’ physical health, mental wellbeing and social engagement.

The ultimate goal for the team is to provide every resident with a sense of purpose, and something to look forward to. A large number of volunteers are also a big part of the Riverview family.

The latest addition to the wellness offerings is a fully fitted gym. Part of the Australian Government funded Sunbeam program, the safe and easy access HUR equipment set was a great choice for the site due to its accessibility, even for the frailest residents.

The equipment selection allows for the roll out of the Sunbeam protocol, which has proven results for falls prevention as well as improvements in overall health and mobility.

The site is also the first globally, for the installation of the Sunbeam balance training module in the HUR Smart Balance.

Balance exercises are an important part of falls prevention, but can be quite boring. Their inclusion in the form of ‘exercigaming’, makes them fun with more exercise variety.

The additional games designed together with Sunbeam’s lead researcher, Dr Jennie Hewitt, are based on the original research with the inclusion of static and dynamic balance exercise, but also include additional games with a cognitive challenge.

Riverview residents are supported by a variety of allied health staff in the delivery of exercise and wellness programs, including Physiotherapist Emily Redman from local business Loxton Physiotherapy, who visits the site weekly and creates individual programs for all residents.

The program delivery is then managed by allied health assistants and the lifestyle team, allowing for continuous and well supported service delivery as well as the creation of an active community.

That regular exercise supports health and wellbeing in aged care homes is



Testing out the new gym equipment, with Emily Redman from Loxton Physiotherapy.

well understood and backed up by several studies, including one published in *The Lancet Healthy Longevity* in 2023, an article on the effects of physical exercise on physical function in older adults in residential care (vol 4, 6, E247-E256, 2023).

This literature review summarised that exercise interventions are effective in improving physical function outcomes in older adults in residential care, with the most consistent benefits gained with around three hours of exercise per week.

The authors finished the article by saying, “Exercise interventions should, therefore, be routinely promoted in long-term care facilities.”

However, allied health services are not always allocated accurately in our aged care system – and organisations like HUR Australia encourage all aged care homes to embrace the evidence-based active model that we know is beneficial to the health and wellbeing of every resident, supported by a strong and effective allied health team, as part of their services.

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