

Implementing a health policy with focus on prevention in Flemish nursing homes

Stien VANDIERENDONCK, Marjolijn VOS

Vlaams Instituut Gezond Leven

50% of residents in nursing homes have a malnourishment risk, 70% of elder persons have tooth decay, 80% of the residents use psychotropic medications (i.e. hypno-sedatives, antipsychotics and antidepressants) on long-term bases and 30 to 70% of the residents fall at least once a year.

In December 2017 the Flemish government launched a 4 year project for Flemish nursing homes where a coach supports them to implement a preventive health policy. Nursing homes can work on a preventive health policy that involves four areas of concern: the prevention of malnutrition, adequate oral health care, effective and efficient use of psychotropic medications, and the prevention of fall incidents. The coach is paid by a subsidy provided by the government.

Nursing homes can enrol in the project by choosing one of the four aforementioned themes. Several requirements must be met in order to be accepted, i.e. the nursing home is willing to organize a training for its employees and they need to exempt 20% FTE for an employee who coordinates the project. When qualified, the coach will support the organization during two years.

The coach has expertise in one of the four themes and received an extensive training in coaching and implementation strategies. The theoretical background for the implementation of a preventive health policy is a 7 steps roadmap, based on the PDCA circle and implementation pilot studies.

The call for registration started on November 26, 2018. Today more than 200 nursing homes enrolled in the project. The first trajectories with coaches started. To guarantee the quality of work, the coach reports progress every 3 months. Once a year there is an intervision to exchange tips, best practices and knowledge.