Strategising to identify preventable adverse drug reactions in rural and regional aging populations of Australia.

Adverse drug reactions (ADRs) in older Australians are responsible for 15% of hospital admissions: 92% are preventable. The problem is not unique to Australia. In the United Kingdom, ADRs account for some 10% of admissions for older adults and the associated cost is up to 2.5 bn pounds each year. Further, approximately 60% of ADRs are not recognised as such, suggesting recorded figures are under-estimates. Systematic processes to check for ADRs exist but the consensus for usage of available tools remains absent and so the problem continues.

Regular monitoring can be more challenging in rural and regional areas, due to qualified health staff being more difficult to access and distances involved. An interprofessional approach using a comprehensive tool for use in primary aged care is proposed to address the problem. In rural and regional areas nurses provide frontline care in institutional care settings and community outreach programs, often with the assistance of aboriginal health workers, forming the nexus for interprofessional care.

The ADRe is a comprehensive tool shown to benefit patients in clinical trials in care homes in Wales, respiratory medicine outpatient departments, and with community mental health teams. The tool was administered by nurses or carers, taking approximately 20 minutes to complete. Nurse-led direct questioning to complete the tool increased actioning of ADR-related problems from a mean of 6.02[SD 2.92] to 9.86[4.48] per participant, and reduced prescription of mental health medicines, leading to improved pain management and decreased falls. It detected symptoms ranging from those that were misattributed to illness through to those of life-threatening potential. It promotes early recognition and reporting and improves understandings of impact and outcomes.

A comprehensive tool, consistently and regularly used by workers at the interface with patient care, would add rigour and substance to medication monitoring and reviews.

References available on request.