

Older Women Living Alone

Formal Title: Older Women Living Alone (OWLa)

Method: Mixed-method

Investigators:

Bolton Clarke: Dr Judy Lowthian (Principal Investigator), Dr Rajna Ogrin, Dr Joanne Enticott, Dr Marissa Dickins, Ms Georgina Johnstone;

Monash University: Associate Professor Duncan Mortimer

Funder/Funding: Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation (LMCF) – \$250,000

Duration: 2017 –2018

Status: Data collection underway

Background:

Despite increasing longevity, older women are socially and financially disadvantaged and at risk of poverty. This negatively impacts on their physical, mental and social wellbeing. This is particularly true for older women who live alone at home. Currently there is a significant gap in our knowledge relating to older women living alone, and an absence in proven strategies that have been shown to maximise their wellbeing and independence while living in the community.

Aims:

The aim of this research is to optimise the wellbeing of older women, focusing on the social, economic and health disadvantages facing this group. The outcomes of this project will inform service provision to Australian women living alone in the community.

Methods:

This mixed-method project involves six distinct components;

Component 1. Systematic Review

This rigorous type of literature review will aim to identify and summarise the evidence regarding safety, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of previously implemented interventions in the area of older people living alone.

Component 2. Registry Analysis

This analysis of clinical data from 2005-2015 from over 50,000 older women who live alone in order to profile the current service utilisations of older women living alone, and understand their pathways to care. This profile will assist with the identification of predictors of vulnerability in this group.

Component 3: Interviews

This will involve interviews with around 50 older women aged 55 years or more who live alone, in order to identify the enablers and barriers to service access, and gaps in service provision related to health, wellbeing and quality of life, and support independence. Older Women Living Alone (OWLa)

Component 4: Forums

These forums will bring together findings from Components 1-3, and co-create evidence-based interventions or strategies to address the identified service and support needs for older women living alone to improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life, and support independence. These forums will involve group discussions between older women who live alone and stakeholders separately, and bring them together in a final forum to identify those strategies which have the highest priority across both groups.

Component 5. Health Economic Evaluation

The health economic evaluation will ascertain measures of economic impact of the selected pathways to care.

Component 6. Synthesis

The final component will synthesise the findings of Components 1-5, and generate evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice change.