A comparison of heatwave response plans from Australia, Canada, the UK, and the USA

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Outline

- Background:
  - Heatwave mortality impacts in aged care facilities (ACFs)
- Aim
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
Background

- Heatwaves result in significant excess mortality, particularly amongst the elderly in ACFs, and pose formidable health care challenges. Garssen et al. (2005); Stafoggia et al. (2006)

- In Germany for example, in August 2003, over 400 excess heatwave mortalities were recorded in residents of ACFs. Klenk et al. (2010)
# Background

## Studies on heatwaves ACF’s mortality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Titles</th>
<th>Countries of studies</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Were less disabled patients the most affected by 2003 heat wave in nursing homes in Paris, France?</td>
<td>France.</td>
<td>Holstein et al. (2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A retrospective study on heat-related mortality in an elderly population during the 2003 heat wave in Modena, Italy: Argento Project.</td>
<td>Italy.</td>
<td>Foroni et al. (2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High ambient temperature associated with increased mortality in nursing home residents.</td>
<td>Germany.</td>
<td>Levy C. (2010).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Background

- Climate change results in increases in heatwave frequency, duration, spatial extent and intensity, making heatwave impacts on human health an increasing risk into the future. IPCC, AR5, WGI, SPM (2013)

- Heatwave response plans are government documents detailing preparation for and response to heatwaves, and are a key adaptation measure. Victorian Government (2010)
Aim

- This presentation examines 23 heatwave response plans with particular focus on specific responses aimed at residents of aged care facilities.
Methods

- Heatwave response plans were sourced via the internet and direct from the national, state/provincial, and municipal health departments.
- A total of 23 heatwave response plans dated from December 2004- January 2013 were obtained.
- 15 heatwave response plans from Australia.
- 3 heatwave response plans from Canada.
- 3 heatwave response plans from the UK.
- 2 heatwave response plans from the USA.
- All countries are developed and high income nations; and experiencing demographic transition of the ageing populations.
Methods

This presentation focuses on three aspects of the analysis:
- Heat stress prevention strategies;
- Inclusion of Aged Care Facilities;
- Heatwave response communication.
Results

Frequency of heat stress prevention strategies from the 23 heatwave response plans.
Number and type of heat stress preventions strategies in each of the heatwave response plans.

Results
Results

- Only three of the 23 plans included specific heatwave response guidance for ACFs. These were:
  - Victoria’s Residential Aged Care Services Heatwave Ready Resource;
  - Canada’s Extreme Heat Events Guidelines: Technical Guide For Health Care Workers; and
  - UK’s Supporting Vulnerable People Before and During A Heatwave: Advice for Care Home Managers and Staff.
Results

Frequency of communication strategies in the 23 heatwave response plans.
Conclusions

- Inconsistency in plans and projected increases in severity and frequency of heatwaves in coming decades underline the need for governments to implement effective guidelines that include specific provisions for ACF.

References


• IPCC. AR5, WGI, SPM (2013).