CHIGC/NWORTH

 Normal Site/Safle Normal

Bangor

 LL57 2PZ

Dear Care-Home,

We are writing to determine whether you would be interested in helping us to run our study (‘uSing rolE-substitutioN In care-homes to improve oRal health’). Tooth decay and gum disease are very common problems for older adults residing in care-homes and can influence their general health. Oral health has a major impact on how residents eat, speak, smile and most importantly, their dignity. This issue is becoming increasingly recognised as a significant UK-wide problem and is why we are looking to run our study in care-homes in London, Northern-Ireland and Wales.

For many residents, finding and accessing a dentist is difficult. We’d like to explore whether other members of the dental team could offer an alternative. The use of Dental Therapists and Dental Nurses have been shown to be effective in promoting good oral health in a number of studies. We’d like to compare current practice with a model where Dental Therapists and Dental Nurses visit care-homes on a regular basis, over a six-month period. Dental Therapists are trained for three years and can provide simple fillings, whereas appropriately trained Dental Nurses can provide oral health education and prevention. Taken together, they offer the potential of addressing problems in a pro-active way with a strong emphasis on preventing dental disease.

As this will be a randomised controlled trial, half of the selected care-homes will continue as normal, whereas the other half will receive this pro-active preventive care from Dental Therapists and Dental Nurses. We will measure the oral health of the residents (between five and ten people who would like to take part) at the start of the study in both sets of care-homes and again at six and twelve months. These examinations will be tailored so that they are not too onerous and will take around ten to fifteen minutes to complete.

All of the examinations and pro-active care from Dental Therapists and Dental Nurses will be undertaken by your local Community Dental Services, who specialise in providing dental care for older people.

To participate in the study, there are a few conditions that each care-home would need to satisfy. We are looking for care-homes that have at least ten residents (65 years and over) and who aren’t currently involved in any oral health programmes or research studies. Given the nature of the study, we also need to exclude care-homes that only specialise in end-of-life or palliative care. The care-homes will need to over-see the information that is generated by the study, but the research team will also assist in this. The residents would need to have at least six natural teeth and be a full-time resident at the home.

The research team will be providing a ‘golden hello’ worth £500 to the care-home, when they start the study and a payment of £50 for each resident recruited. We also fully understand and appreciate the impact that COVID has had on care-homes and how this has dramatically affected the sector. Given this, we will actively seek not to add to the burden that you have already experienced. We won't start the study until safe to do so and all our study team and Community Dental Services will act in accordance with their University or local Trust policies to ensure they are COVID-19 compliant. We will also be monitoring the study very carefully, with a dedicated local study team, so that we can be sensitive to your needs during this period and so that you have a local contact for the study.

If you are interested, please contact your local Community Dental Service who provided you with this introductory letter. We’ve also attached a short flier for more information.

On behalf of the research team,



Paul Brocklehurst

NHS Consultant in Dental Public Health and Honorary Professor