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INCREASING ROUTINE VITAMIN D PRESCRIPTION TO AGED CARE RESIDENTS IN NEW ZEALAND: GIVING RESIDENTS THE D-FENCE AGAINST FALLS

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Background Vitamin D supplements have been shown to reduce the number of falls in older adults living in aged residential care facilities. However, in New Zealand only 16% of aged care residents were being prescribed vitamin D in 2007.

Aim To encourage increased prescription of vitamin D to residents in aged care facilities throughout New Zealand.

Method The Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) led the development and phased national rollout of a robust education programme. ACC facilitated the formation of a Specialist Advisory Group of lead clinicians and researchers. This group developed a vitamin D prescribing guideline for General Practitioners, based on the available literature and clinical best practice.

An educational programme was developed to increase awareness and encourage routine prescription of vitamin D. ACC partnered with District Health Boards and worked collaboratively to disseminate the education programme to General Practitioners, facility staff, aged care residents and pharmacists. Rollout was phased over a 3 year period and by 2011- national coverage was achieved.

Results Vitamin D uptake was monitored quarterly by matching the National Health Index numbers of residents with National Health Index numbers of paid pharmacy claims for Vitamin D preparations.

Once the education programme had been delivered throughout the country, vitamin D prescribing had increased to 66%.

Significance The findings to date suggest the national rollout of an educational programme that includes a prescribing guideline can increase prescription of vitamin D to residents.