Coronavirus: 'Hospital does not want them', say relatives

[Sharri Markson](#)   7:23AM August 13, 2020

The Alfred hospital in Melbourne. Picture: Wayne Taylor

Elderly people infected with COVID-19 are arriving at Melbourne hospitals, being refused treatment and sent back to their aged care home in a move devastating families.

One nursing home, Jewish Care in Windsor, had two residents turned away from hospitals in one day, including one who was refused admission at both The Alfred and Cabrini.

Another facility – the Glenlyn Aged Care in Glenroy – told the families of residents that Royal Melbourne Hospital "would not be accepting (residents) and they were to remain at the facility and be placed on end of life care and/or be sedated if they were wandering".

"Please know that we have tried our utmost best to transfer the residents who we cannot isolate to the hospital but, to put it simply, the hospital does not want them," management at Glenlyn, which is home to residents with high-care needs, told families.

The Australian on Tuesday revealed aged care home residents, some in their 40s, were being sedated instead of hospitalised or moved to another facility where they could be kept in isolation.

But Victorian health authorities are also refusing to hospitalise coronavirus-infected elderly people from aged care homes — even without clinical needs like dementia.

On August 3, Jewish Care transported one resident with COVID-19 to The Alfred but that person was refused admission and sent back to the aged care home. Another resident was sent to two hospitals and turned away at both.

"The family of the resident wanted their loved one to go to hospital but she was refused admission at both the Alfred and Cabrini," Jewish Care's community general manager, Vanessa Cohen, wrote in correspondence seen by The Australian.

"As an Australian citizen, I am completely dismayed to witness first-hand the devastating situation in our public health system."

Since that time, one Jewish Care resident has died, 17 staff have contracted the virus. The Windsor facility has 26 residents with coronavirus who are understood to be still in the aged care home and not in hospital.

There are now 1932 active cases relating to aged care facilities in Victoria, one-quarter of the total number. There were 16 deaths linked to known outbreaks at aged care centres — out of 21 — recorded on Wednesday.

The Department of Health and Human Services declined to comment on Tuesday and did not respond to requests for details about the latest hospital refusals on Wednesday.

But Daniel Andrews has denied aged care residents are being denied hospital treatments.

"Transfers to hospitals, the notion that people are being refused is not the advice I have," the Victorian Premier said.

"There are some in this industry that would no longer like to have all of their residents under their roof, that would be easier perhaps."

Mr Andrews said 476 aged care residents had been transferred to hospital. "The mere fact that the number of residents who are being transferred to hospitals continues to grow each day would indicate to me that our clinical staff are making very difficult judgments based on clinical needs and based on the circumstance of that particular resident," he said.

But Robert Hoffman, a doctor who works in aged care homes, said hospitals had previously been quick to take patients.

"The response from the Royal Melbourne Hospital was fast and effective and 20 residents were transferred to public and private hospitals across Melbourne. This was because they were unwell or were unable to be isolated due to dementia," he said. "Now in level four lockdown the public health response is the opposite."

Glenlyn, in its note to family members, said it had "pleaded with DHHS, the Victorian Public Health Unit, the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission" for help but had been told that hospitals "did not have enough beds".

Instead the aged care centre, which has 23 residents and six staff test positive for COVID-19, was advised to either sedate those infected if they

have dementia and are at risk of wandering, or put them on end-of-life medication.

The practice of sedation is controversial.

An Aged Care Clinical Advisory Committee paper, part of a federal ministerial submission provided to the aged care royal commission last year, concluded there was "clearly a problem with the overuse of antipsychotic medications and benzodiazepines in (residential aged care)".

Jewish Care declined to comment.

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