Alcohol abuse and the older person: A specialized model of residential care

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The Wicking Project evaluated the effectiveness of a specialized model in improving life quality and wellbeing of older people (aged ≥ 50 years) living with an alcohol-related brain injury (ARBI) and highly challenging behaviors.

Funded by the JO & JR Wicking Trust and managed by Wintringham - a not-for-profit provider of aged care services to the homeless population, fourteen volunteer participants experiencing repeated cycles of homelessness took part in an 18-month research trial. Seven participants were supported in a residence by way of a specialized care model. Seven control group participants were monitored as they continued to live within the community. The residential model involved 24/7 specialized supported care and individualized recreation and behavior management plan implementation. These initiatives were supported by a team of highly trained and skilled personnel including neuropsychological case management. All participants underwent comprehensive pre-, inter- and post-trial assessments.

Outcome data demonstrated statistically significant reductions in the level of anxiety and depression experienced by the residential participants as well as reductions in the amount of alcohol consumed and increases in productivity when compared with the control group. Positive changes were measured in nearly all life quality indicators for the residential group many to a level of clinical significance.

To facilitate the transfer of skills and knowledge gained through this project this presentation will provide advice on strategies to assist with managing behaviors of concern among older people living with ARBI and facilitate the successful transitioning of clients back into mainstream care. Economic modeling will be presented that delivers evidence of considerable cost-to-government savings provided through this intervention.

Biography
Alice Rota-Bartelink has worked across a wide range of service sectors. She held a 4-year lecturing position at La Trobe University, Melbourne where she attained her Ph.D. She joined Wintringham in 2001 to undertake an international study of homelessness among the aged and more recently to manage the Wicking Project presented today. She has authored 7 peer reviewed journal articles and has presented at numerous national and international conferences as well as delivering a series of Master Class workshops on this issue across Australia and New Zealand.

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