

# Empowering Registered Nurses in Aged Care Teams to be Clinical Leaders

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## Abstract

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This Doctoral study explored the impact of structured clinical leadership training on registered nurses who hold positions as clinical leaders and managers in Residential Aged Care Facilities (formally Nursing Homes) in Australia. The aim of the study was to empower nursing workforce in Australian aged care settings through a formal clinical leadership and leadership training program that represented an intervention designed to empower participants to become care team leaders. The study followed a sequential mixed-methods design and included a pre and post-intervention survey completed by the 150 members of the intervention/study and the 150 members of the control group.

The intervention group engaged in a structured 5-module training course in clinical leadership undertaken over a period of 5 months. This group was then involved in a qualitative interview and a process of thematic analysis was used to analyse transcripts of these sessions to enhance the findings of the quantitative survey results. The results from both the quantitative and qualitative inquiry were then synthesised through integrative analysis.

The findings from this study suggest that nurses are well suited to being transformational leaders in aged care and that clinical leadership training has the capacity to empower registered nurses to become care team leaders in managing the multidisciplinary team. Clinical Leadership training gave clarity to the position of RN Team Leader and provided skills in leading the team to improved outcomes for all stakeholders.

The role of the RN in aged care is a specialised one and as such requires contextualised clinical leadership training that empowers the nurse to transact with the team and transform the care. The study findings also suggest that, if organisations respect the value of a nurse's autonomy and skills to practice, along with the valued role of the RN as the Clinical leader, then improved recruitment and retention of nurses in aged care will be achieved.

Society is changing and so too are the demands on healthcare. As the population of the world ages, there will be a fundamental shift in how we provide care and support to an increasing number of frailing individuals and their circles of influence. Nurses are instrumental for leading change and, once trained in clinical leadership, become empowered and positively disposed towards what is usually a complex and diverse care setting. Nurses and nursing care continues to hold the high ground on the values and principles of society that reflect the expectation of the profession in supporting their needs. The true value will be realised when we empower the nurses to be the change champions in clinical leadership in aged care.