

Clearwater's Perspective on Senior Care Residences and the COVID 19 Epidemic.

30th march 2020

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"

Benjamin Franklin

The terrible COVID 19 currently engulfing the world is particularly cruel for our seniors. The virus demonstrates a very clear pattern of rapidly increasing fatality rate as the age of the infected person rises. This awful reality presents a challenge to senior care facilities that is literally a matter of life or death. We at Clearwater are greatly saddened and disturbed by reports that some senior care centers in Spain are failing this test with unspeakable consequences for their residents and their families.

When this epidemic has passed, many changes will have to be implemented by many senior care centers to ensure that that our seniors are better protected against future epidemics as well as in day to day care in normal times. Regulators and Senior Care Residence operators will have to work together effectively to bring about these changes. It is this spirit that Clearwater would like to share our perspective and practices which have served as well in the past and will be



Clearwater

PRIVATE INVESTMENT

applied to our Spanish facilities, beginning with our “Virgen de Lourdes” residence in Villanova de Arousa, Galicia. We share this in the hope that this information may be in some way helpful to the Spanish senior care residence community.

Clearwater has an integrated, multi-level approach to control of infectious disease in our facilities that brings together not only care protocols typically applied to employees in senior care homes, but also human resources practices, physical facility preparedness, the nutrition of our residents and their communication with their families. The end result is a comprehensive package which is a fundamental part of the Clearwater culture. The following is a brief outline of each of these elements.

Senior care residences typically apply infectious disease control protocols such as mandatory use of hand sanitizer, surgical gloves and frequent disinfectant cleaning of all surfaces subject to hand contact by residents, staff and guests. These are a good start, but as the COVID 19 epidemic has demonstrated, these measures are not in and of themselves sufficient. In order for a residence to withstand and control a serious infectious disease outbreak, the employees must be well prepared long before the outbreak occurs through training that ingrains these prophylactic practices into the daily routine of each and every person who comes into contact with our residents.

The Clearwater approach places great emphasis on molding our employees in each facility into a cohesive team. This is done in a multitude of ways, but the essence is that our employees see themselves as a part of a mutually supporting group with a mission as caregivers. This cannot be just words, but rather must be



Clearwater

PRIVATE INVESTMENT

perceived and assimilated by the employees through manner in which the residence is operated in normal times, long before an infectious disease outbreak occurs. The best protocols are useless if employees leave their jobs in times of crisis, as has occurred in many Spanish care homes in the actual COVID 19 outbreak. As an additional practical step to assist in employee retention during stressful times, our protocol insures an immediate 50% bonus in employee compensation when an infectious disease alert is declared in a Clearwater facility in order to justly reward employees for the greater sacrifice required of them during a health crisis.

Another key element of the Clearwater strategy for dealing with infectious disease is the preparedness of the physical facility itself. Though costly in financial terms, we demand hospital quality air filtrations systems in the ventilation of all our facilities. This is a steep initial cost when building or renovating a facility, but that pays dividends over the long term that more than justify the expense. Additionally, we require our facilities to hold in storage on-site a three month supply of critical elements such as hand sanitizer, gloves and masks that can become difficult to buy in the marketplace if an infectious outbreak become widespread, as we have seen in the current COVID 19 crisis.

Insofar as our residents themselves, our infectious disease strategy focuses on their nutrition as well as moral. In all Clearwater residences our onsite kitchens prepare nutritious meals for our residents from fresh locally produced products to the greatest extent possible, with emphasis on fresh fruits and vegetables. While this is much more expensive than the prepared meals purchased from a centralized kitchen, we are convinced that this "home cooking" approach contributes not only to boosting the immune systems of our residents, but also greatly increases



their well-being and satisfaction as residents enjoy meals which are the same as those they enjoyed at home.

Another key element of our approach is communication between residents and their families. If an infectious disease outbreak requires that the activation of our visitor restriction protocol, our centers take full advantage of the new communications platforms such as Whatsapp and Skype to enable our residents to continue to communicate with their families and loved ones. In room pre-programmed touchscreens with key contacts make it easier for our residents to reach out through these means and continue to feel involved and connected when visitation is suspended. A feeling of abandonment and isolation is precisely what must be avoided to maintain a strong immune system and good moral during visitor restrictions.

In short, the Clearwater approach to infectious disease control in our Senior Care facilities is a multilayer and integrated, going beyond simple protocols in direct patient care to include team building and employee retention through human resources practices, permanent high inventory of critical supplies, state of the art air-filtering, immune system and moral building nutrition for residents, and the use of the new communication technologies to fight loneliness and feels of exclusion it is necessary to restrict visitor access. All these measures contribute to the fact that the cost structure at Clearwater facilities is higher than average for the Senior Care industry. However, it is when a crisis such as the COVID 19 virus strikes, that we see the truth of the Benjamin Franklin's words quoted at the beginning of this article. Investing in protecting our residents from infectious diseases above and beyond what is required by regulation is an investment which pays immeasurable returns to Clearwater stakeholders.



Clearwater

PRIVATE INVESTMENT

CLEARWATER. March 2020.