

Reducing impacts of social Isolation in assisted care facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Thermopolis, Wyoming

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Hypothesis

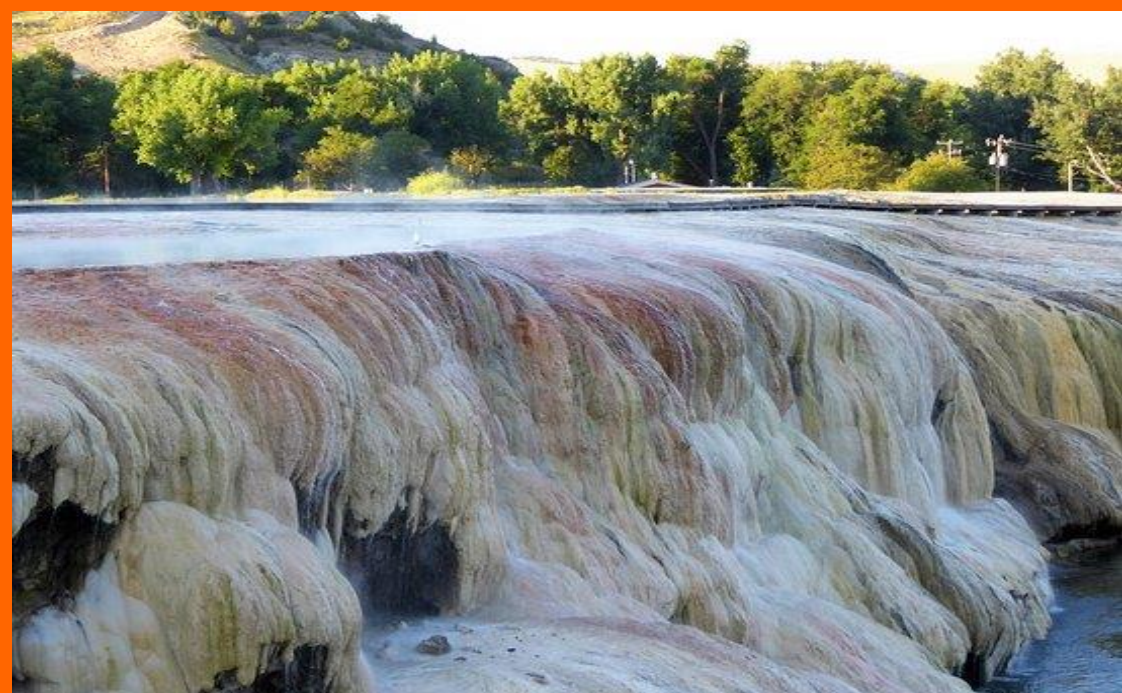
- Reduce impacts of social isolation in the elderly who reside in assisted care facilities using controlled visits and telehealth.



Thermopolis, Wyoming. Pop. of 3009

Background

- Thermopolis is a rural town with a single critical care hospital and clinic.
- Unusually large population of over 65 (27.7%) with more than 7% of those individuals living in assisted care facilities.
- Area is largely tourism driven.
- Located on the Big Horn river at the base of the owl creek mountains.



Hot Springs State Park in Thermopolis



Dinosaur Museum, Thermopolis

Community Assets Profile

- Wyoming Pioneer home (WPH)
 - State funded assisted living facility
 - Houses 1/3rd of local elderly population.
 - Acts as “halfway” assisted care facility by basing their care model on increased independence and community interaction for residents
 - WPH heavily impacted by COVID-19 due to total loss of independence of residents.
- Community medical care is based around one small critical care hospital, one primary care clinic, and four assisted care facilities.
- Other community assets include an active public health nurse, local in-home medical care providers, and a small physical therapy center

Literature Review

- Dutch health department studied the limited allowance of visitors to 26 assisted care facilities to gauge the possibility of allowing visitors to combat loneliness and the negative impacts of social isolation.
 - Study drew from a large diverse population of facilities and showed that with proper adherence to protocol, COVID-19 transmission was non-existent.
 - The study was limited by the diverse reporting methods and various adherence to protocols.
- Additional studies gauged the effectiveness of telehealth in combating social isolation.
 - Showed increase access to specialists and hard to reach family.
 - Decreased staff workload.
 - Addressed challenges in acquiring technology and training staff/residents.



Conclusions

- Initial data shows that visits to assisted care facilities, while adhering to protocol, **do not cause transmission of COVID-19.**
- Training for telehealth is easily accessible. Telehealth can also double as family visits.
- Grants are accessible and easy to apply for.
- Adherence to protocol is vital.
- Training staff and residents in COVID-19 protocol is time consuming.



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