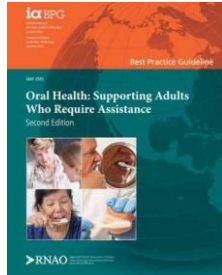


## RNAO Best Practices: Evidence Booster

### Improving oral health outcomes and wellness for residents in long-term care home

#### Oral Health: Supporting Adults Who Require Assistance (2020)



RNAO's best practice guideline (BPG) – *Oral Health: Supporting Adults Who Require Assistance (2020)* — provides evidence-based recommendations to help nurses, interprofessional teams, and caregivers provide effective oral care for adults who require assistance. The BPG promotes a collaborative approach to oral care, supports high-quality care interventions, and aims to improve oral health outcomes. It addresses all levels of support—from preparing supplies to providing full physical assistance — while emphasizing appropriate supervision, prompting, and respect for each person's independence and autonomy.



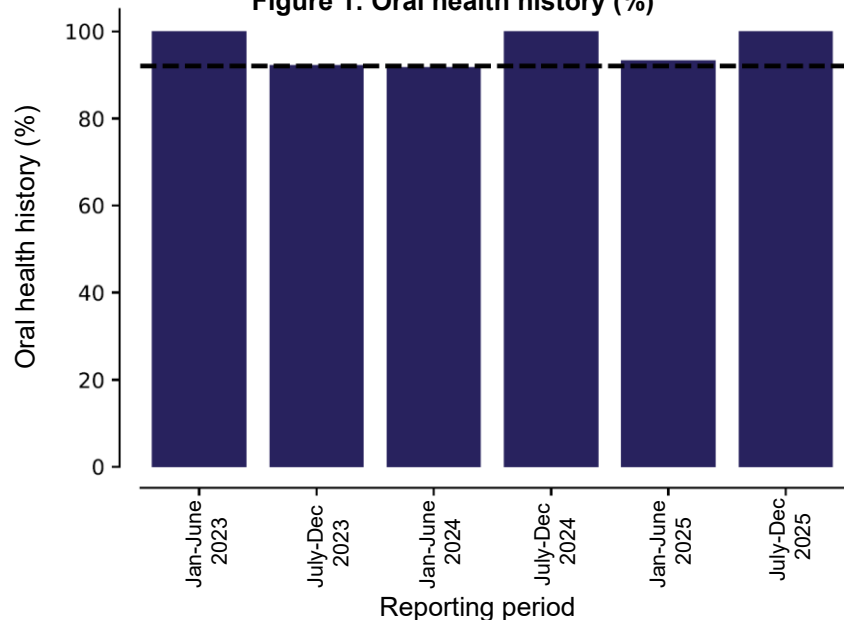
Pioneer Ridge Long Term Care & Senior Services (Pioneer Ridge) is a 150-bed long-term care (LTC) home located in Thunder Bay, Ontario, overlooking the shores of Lake Superior. The home is accredited by Accreditation Canada, reflecting its ongoing commitment to quality care. Since 2016, Pioneer Ridge has been recognized as a Best Practice Spotlight Organization® (BPSO®) demonstrating leadership in evidence-based practices that enhance resident care and outcomes. In 2025, Pioneer Ridge became the first LTC home in northwestern Ontario to adopt the Butterfly Model of Care — an innovative, emotion-based, person-centred care approach that is focused on meaningful engagement, resident autonomy, and supportive, home-like environments over traditional task-oriented routines.

**Aim:** To examine the clinical outcomes associated with the implementation of RNAO's *Oral Health: Supporting Adults Who Require Assistance BPG (2020)* (Oral Health BPG) at Pioneer Ridge Long Term Care Home in Ontario.

**Measures:** The Nursing Quality Indicators for Reporting and Evaluation® (NQuIRE®) data system was used to determine: (a) the percentage of newly admitted residents for whom an oral health history was completed on admission; and (b) the percentage of residents whose oral health stayed the same or improved while receiving care at Pioneer Ridge.

**Clinical improvement:** Pioneer Ridge demonstrated an increase in both the percentage of newly admitted residents for whom an oral health history was completed on admission (Figure 1) and the percentage of residents whose oral health stayed the same or improved while receiving care.

**Figure 1: Oral health history (%)**



**Impact:** From 2023 to 2025, Pioneer Ridge consistently demonstrated excellence by completing oral health history (over 90%) of newly admitted residents. The percentage of residents whose oral health stayed the same or improved while receiving care.

#### Practice changes

In 2023, the team determined that the previously implemented Oral Health BPG required re-implementation after receiving concerns from staff, residents, and families about declining oral care. With support from Confederation College's Dental Hygiene program, staff received updated education on best practices in oral care. The Oral Health Assessment Tool was added to the electronic charting system for more accurate admission assessments, personal support worker (PSW) flowsheets were updated to include an oral hygiene section, and related policies were revised. A multidisciplinary team completed a gap and oral health assessments were successfully completed for all newly admitted residents. This work is guided by a dedicated steering committee made up of the best practice clinician, the RAI coordinator, a registered nurse, a registered practical nurse, and a PSW.

## RNAO Best Practices: Evidence Booster

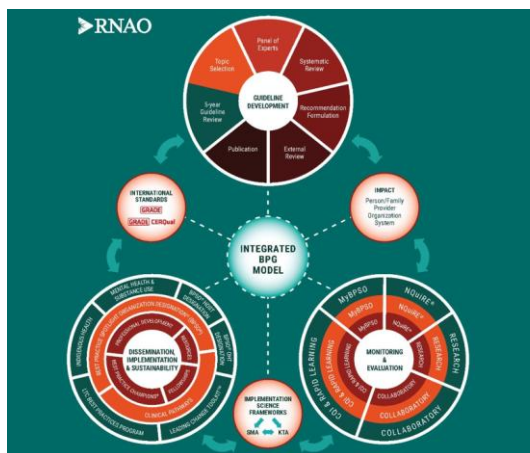
**Figure 2: Snapshots from their successful reimplementaion**



### Practice changes

- Laminated oral-care posters were placed on residents' mirrors to remind staff and residents to brush their teeth and to visually demonstrate proper brushing techniques.
- Oral health caddies were assembled for each resident, stocked with toothbrushes, toothpaste, mouthwash, small cups, denture cups, and denture brushes (as needed). Caddy audits showed that staff consistently replenished supplies, and staff reported that the caddies made oral care easier and more effective.
- Family newsletter updates informed families about the oral-health initiative and provided information on accessing a dental hygienist.
- The team partnered with the Ontario Dental Hygiene Association to submit a funding proposal for an in-house dental-hygienist. While the ministry did not approve the request at this time, the team remains enthusiastic and committed to pursuing new opportunities to further enhance oral care for residents.

**Conclusion:** Pioneer Ridge demonstrated that the implementation of RNAO's Oral Health BPG (2020) led to an increase in the percentage of newly admitted residents for whom an oral health history was completed on admission and increase in the percentage of residents whose oral health stayed the same or improved while receiving care.



RNAO launched the BPG Program in 1999<sup>1</sup> with funding from the Government of Ontario, Canada. The evidence-based BPGs developed to date are transforming nursing care and interprofessional work environments in all sectors in health systems worldwide. BPSOs are health service and academic organizations that implement multiple BPGs through a formal agreement and systematic process, as well as evaluate their impact on health and organizational outcomes<sup>2</sup>.

NQuIRE<sup>2,3</sup>, a unique nursing data system housed in the International Affairs and Best Practice Guideline Centre, allows BPSOs worldwide the ability to measure the impact of BPG implementation. The NQuIRE data system collects, compares and reports data on human resource structure, guideline-based nursing-sensitive process, and outcome indicators. Contact us by email at [NQuIRE@RNAO.ca](mailto:NQuIRE@RNAO.ca) for more details. To learn more about RNAO's IABPG Centre, please visit [RNAO.ca/bpg](http://RNAO.ca/bpg). This work is funded by the Government of Ontario. All work produced by the RNAO is editorially independent from its funding source.

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