

Parkinson's disease in Australian residential aged care

Understanding care needs and implications for allied health

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Background

Parkinson's disease (PD) is the fastest-growing neurological condition globally [1]. It is estimated that up to 10% of people living in residential aged care (RAC) may have PD. Motor and non-motor symptoms of PD increase care complexity, requiring multidisciplinary and specialised support. Despite the Australian Royal Commission into Aged Care highlighting the importance of high-quality care, evidence shows a decline in access to allied health in RAC facilities [2]. Care staff often lack specific education in PD, crucial for effective management [3]. Little is known about the specific profiles and care needs of Australian aged care residents with PD.

Aims

- 1) Profile Australian aged care residents with PD (2022 snapshot)
- 2) Describe their care needs

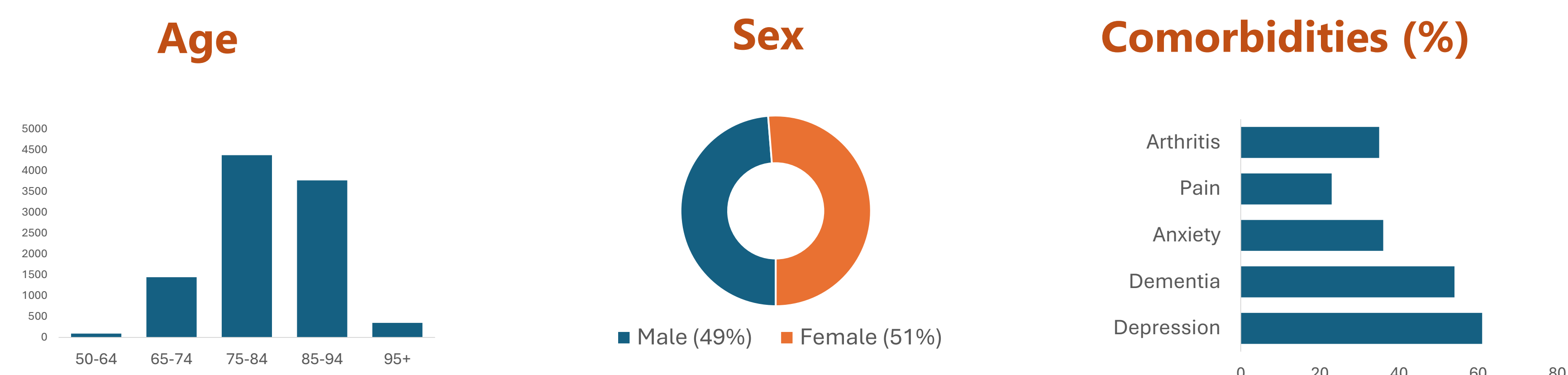
Methods

People with PD living in RAC facilities in 2022 were identified using diagnostic codes in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) National Aged Care Database [4]. Demographics, comorbidities and care needs were extracted from the Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI). Reference data were obtained from AIHW annual reports.



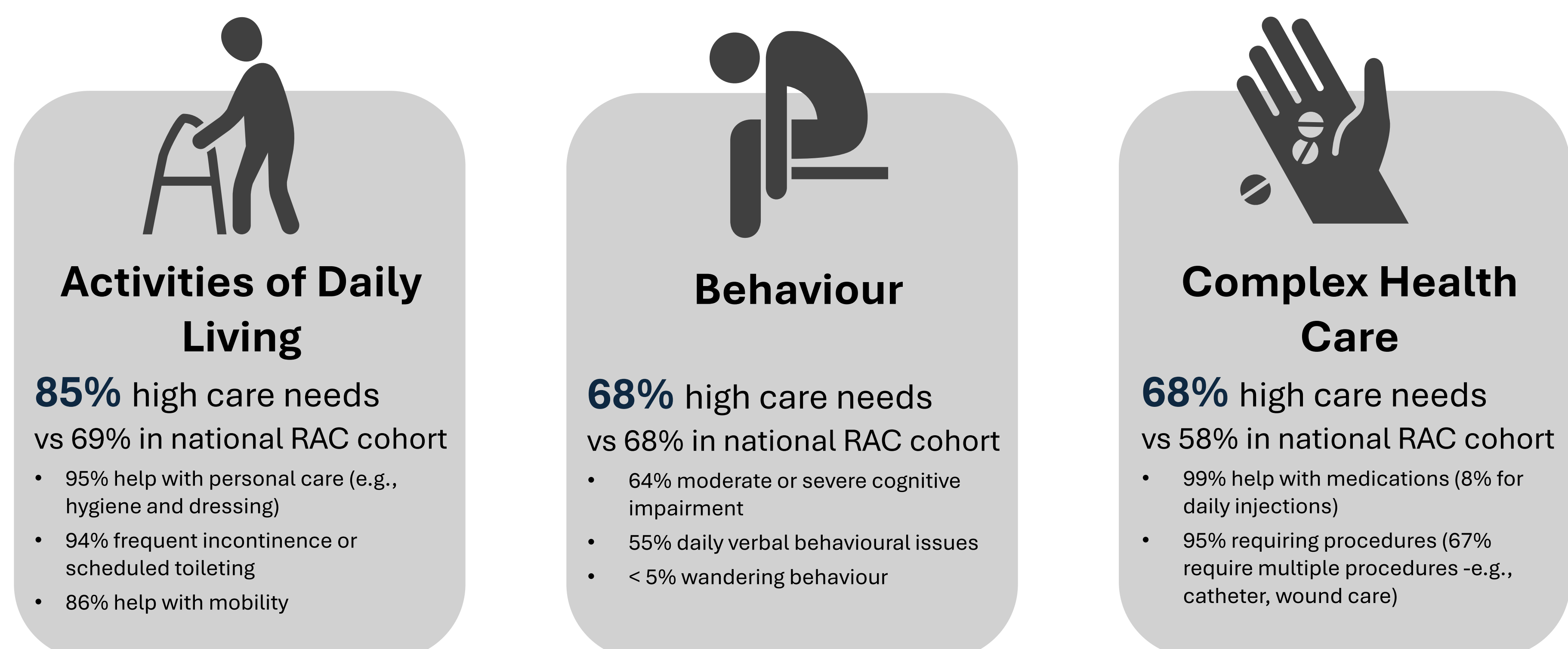
Results

10,024 residents in Australian RAC facilities were reported to have PD in 2022. This represents **5.5%** of the national RAC population.



Care needs

Proportion of residents with PD with high care needs in ACFI domains



Over 65% of residents with PD had high care needs in all 3 domains

Conclusions

Aged care residents with PD have high and rising care needs. They have greater daily activity and complex health needs than the general RAC population.

Implications

These findings indicate an urgent need for tailored multidisciplinary care, appropriate care models, and adequate resources to support residents with PD. A well-trained workforce is essential to accurately identify and manage symptoms related to PD and comorbidities.

Recommendations

- Invest in allied health capacity and training
- Integrate PD-specific models of care in RAC
- Consider use of digital health technologies (e.g., telehealth, wearables)

References

- [1] Bloem et al (2021)
- [2] Meulenbroeks et al (2022)
- [3] Makoutonina et al (2010)
- [4] AIHW (2024) <https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/resources/access-data>