



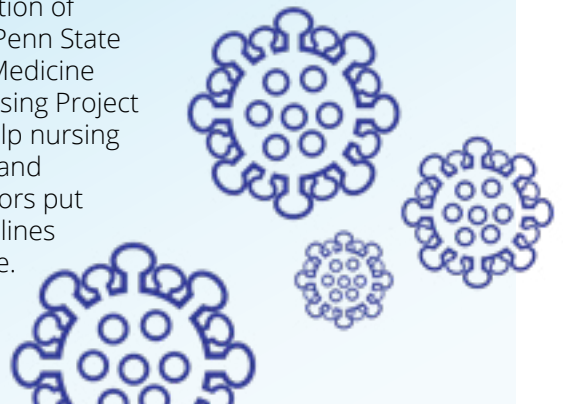
Implementing  
Infection Control  
and Quality  
of Life Best  
Practices in  
Nursing Homes  
with Project  
ECHO

**NURSING HOMES WERE HIT HARD BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN 2020, WITH OVER 1 MILLION TOTAL RESIDENT COVID-19 CASES AND OVER 150,000 RESIDENT COVID-19 DEATHS.**

The characteristics of nursing homes, such as close living spaces, residents' older age and health conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes, placed residents at higher risk for severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Preventing infections like COVID-19 in nursing homes was a challenge for many reasons, including a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks and gloves, new and frequently changing regulatory guidance, insufficient numbers of staff, and more. Unfortunately, one of the largest barriers to preventing infections in nursing homes was that the majority of (97%) nursing home staff were not formally trained in how to prevent or control infections.

**What has been done about COVID-19 in Nursing Homes?**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided nursing homes with written guidance for infection control and prevention of COVID-19. Penn State College of Medicine proposed using Project ECHO to help nursing home staff and administrators put these guidelines into practice.





## THAT'S WHERE THE INFECTION CONTROL AND PREVENTION FOR NURSING HOMES STUDY COMES IN!

The goal of this study is to understand how healthcare professionals can reduce COVID-19 infections, deaths, and hospitalizations in nursing home residents, and improve their quality of life. To do this, the study team assigned participants to two groups—both receiving real-time, interactive learning opportunities, covering topics such as COVID testing, family visitation, social isolation, and more.

### GROUP ONE

#### ECHO

The ECHO group received learning sessions split into two phases. Phase one included 16 sessions, and phase two included nine optional sessions on real-world stories.

### GROUP TWO

#### ECHO-plus

The ECHO-plus group received 25 sessions, with eight more sessions months later to reinforce what was learned before.

### What is Project ECHO?



Project ECHO (Extension for Community Health Outcomes) is a virtual and case-based educational model. A team of experts at Penn State College of Medicine provided live virtual education and mentoring on infection prevention and control to nursing home staff and administrators across the country. The team combined educational training with discussion of real-life examples and stories from participants. Together, experts and participants discussed challenges, solutions, and shared feedback, creating a learning community to improve knowledge, confidence, and skills in topics like COVID-19 infections in nursing homes.

### Q WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY?

**136** nursing homes from across 12 states, including Pennsylvania, participated in the study. Nurses, administrators, and other staff members were welcome to attend the educational sessions.

### Q WHAT DID THE STUDY FIND?

**THIS** work is still in progress and ongoing. The research team is excited to share the study findings as soon as they are complete.

### Q WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

**IT IS** of great importance to learn how to keep nursing home residents, staff, and loved ones safe from COVID-19 and future infections. Providing effective learning opportunities for nursing homes to improve the health of residents and staff is critical. Project ECHO at Penn State College of Medicine continues to look for ways to use research and evidence to improve the lives of both nursing home residents and staff.



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