

Multilingual Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line

by Lisa Tribuzio

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While it has been great to see governments and aged care services focus on providing critical health advice to seniors during COVID-19, it's become apparent that a one-size-fits-all approach can exclude people. A plethora of health updates have been translated, sent to communities, and posted on websites, however in many ways these have been incredibly confusing for older people from CALD backgrounds to navigate and access the information they need.

The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing's Multilingual Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line launched in February 2021 allows older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to receive tailored access to important COVID-19 updates and aged care information in six languages –Greek, Arabic and Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese and Italian. All calls are triaged by trained multilingual personnel from Spectrum MRC, one of Australia's most established migrant resource centres, in partnership with All Graduates, industry leaders in language and interpreting services. Callers are then directed to multilingual guidance from the wider COVID-19 Support Line for older Australians that is delivered by COTA Australia, OPAN, National Seniors Australia and Dementia Australia.

Key themes have emerged from the program that offer a window into the current needs of diverse CALD seniors relating to receiving information about aged care and COVID-19 updates that is culturally responsive and culturally sensitive. Callers have requested information on how to access COVID-19 vaccinations and vaccine side effects. In particular, how to access the vaccine when they have limited mobility, or they are housebound. Callers also want to better understand border closures and their options for visiting family overseas and travel restrictions.

The program model demonstrated that callers want to continue communicating in their own language throughout the service journey and as well as reaffirmed the importance of having a multilingual aged and health care sector and programs that focus on the importance of trust and rapport when delivering service to CALD seniors.

This project is about ensuring the same level of access to aged care and health advice for all older Australians. Offering a phone line where people are greeted in-language may sound simple, but it is incredibly important to addressing the digital and literacy barriers that we know many people from CALD backgrounds face.



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Italian 1800 549 844

Greek 1800 549 845

Vietnamese 1800 549 846

Mandarin 1800 549 847

Cantonese 1800 549 848

Arabic 1800 549 849