THE LTC SECTOR THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS:
PER ASPERA AD ASTRA*?

LTCcovid webinar
* through hardships to the stars

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1. Factors of vulnerability of the LTC sector
2. Top challenges and policy responses in OECD countries
3. Conclusions
FACTORS OF VULNERABILITY OF THE LTC SECTOR
A sizeable share of COVID-19 deaths has been in the long-term care sector

Note: Data on cumulative deaths up to early February 2021. 1. Includes confirmed and suspected deaths. 2. Only includes deaths occurring within LTC facilities. 3. Data come from regional governments using different methodologies, some including suspected deaths. 4. Includes deaths in nursing homes and social LTC facilities. Source: (Comas-Herrera et al., 2021), (ECDC, 2021), (OECD Questionnaire on COVID-19 in LTC).
Pre-existing structural challenges

- Poor **working conditions**: low tenure, part time employment, low pay
- Chronic **underinvestment**, a large number of preventable safety failures occurring in the sector prior to the pandemic
- Insufficient **quality standards** and monitoring
- Insufficient **co-ordination** with the rest of the health system
Emergency preparedness in long-term care was insufficient

Task forces were created, but very few are permanent.

If task forces were created, did they include at least one LTC expert?

- Crisis groups and task forces were specific for LTC, but included at least one LTC expert: 35%
- Crisis groups and task forces were not specific for LTC, but included at least one LTC expert: 46%
- No: 19%

Note: Preliminary findings. Source: OECD questionnaire on COVID-19 and LTC 2021.
TOP CHALLENGES AND POLICY RESPONSES IN OECD COUNTRIES
In a ranking from 1 (not an issue) to 5 (extremely challenging), countries defined access to PPE as 3 and access to testing as 4.

Note: LTC recipients refer to those aged 65 years old receiving regularly home care who reported ADL or IADL limitations in SHARE wave 7 (2017). Question is “Did the people who cared for you wear protective devices such as masks or gloves?”. Source: SHARE-COVID-19 wave 8 (data refer to June and August 2020).
Measures on PPE and testing

- Guidelines
- Stockpiles
- Funding
- Training
- Mobile Teams
- Funding
LTC workers were at higher risk of being infected compared with other workers.

Facilities with lower numbers of LTC workers were associated with higher infection rates.
Measures to address staff shortages

Source: 2021 OECD Questionnaire on COVID-19 and LTC.
Difficult management of visits restrictions

A number of countries after initially banning visitors except for an emergency or end-of-life reason, were later allowing them but with restrictions on the numbers, frequency or conditions of access.

Source: 2021 OECD Questionnaire on COVID-19 and LTC.
Care integration has improved, but could be strengthened further

Coordination with primary care providers
- Before the pandemic, 10 OECD countries reported having guidelines or legislation on the integration of LTC and primary care
- Since the pandemic, 8 OECD countries have introduced new measures to foster multi-disciplinary teams, with the aim to integrate more primary care in LTC facilities (EE, CA, CO, FI, LV, LU, PT, SI)

Coordination with hospitals
- Since the pandemic, 7 countries introduced new guidelines on the integration of long-term care and care in hospital (BE, CO, EE, EL, FR, HU, NL)
Initial findings point to a positive impact of vaccination

Note: UK started the vaccination campaign on December 8 2020 and a third national lockdown on January 6 2021. Death rate for the age group 0-64 is displayed on the secondary axis.
Source: (COVID-19 Ined, 2021)
CONCLUSIONS
The COVID-19 crisis as a learning opportunity

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>DATA</td>
<td>• Ensure standardized, comprehensive and timely data collection and use</td>
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<tr>
<td>PERFORMANCE</td>
<td>• Monitor the sector’s performance, to ensure it is ready for the next crisis</td>
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<td>WORKFORCE</td>
<td>• Address existing workforce issues, improving pay and job quality, staff ratios and skills mismatch</td>
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<tr>
<td>INFECTION CONTROL</td>
<td>• Introduce better infection control protocols to minimize health-care-associated infections</td>
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<tr>
<td>HOME CARE</td>
<td>• Home-based options may permit better containment of transmission but require adequate protection (PPE) and job quality for LTC workers</td>
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https://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/long-term-care.htm

OECD (2021, forthcoming), *Supporting informal carers: Policies to leave no carer behind* (tentative title)