Southcare Geriatric Flying Squad – An Initiative to Improve Quality of Care in Aged Care Facilities

Local Solutions

Introduction
Frail elderly residents admitted to hospital from aged care facilities may be better cared for in the facility itself. Patient outcomes are shown to be better if they are treated in their own environment to reduce complications such as delirium, falls and infections. Reducing avoidable admissions has indirect impact on reducing hospital burden and health care related expenditure. A readily available physician service has been shown to be effective in reducing avoidable admissions.

Aim
The Southcare Geriatric Flying Squad aims to improve acute and palliative care services in aged care facilities and simultaneously reduce ambulance travel and emergency department and hospital admissions.

Method
With the approval of the General Practitioner, aged care facility residents who deteriorate and potentially need hospital admission are referred to the Flying squad. Review by Geriatrician or Nurse Practitioner is undertaken within 2-4 hours of receiving referral and management plan is in place. Patient, family members and GPs are well informed of treatment decisions, which add to patient and family satisfaction.

Results
• 491 residents referred between 01 November 2011 and 30 June 2013.
• 378 emergency presentations and 348 hospital admissions prevented over a 19 month period.
• average time taken to see residents was 90 minutes
• most common referrals were chest infectious/aspiration pneumonia, delirium, end of life care, CCF and cellulitis
• approximately 20% of all referred patients were provided palliative care in their usual environment, highlighting the futility of admission for this subgroup of patients at an extreme end of frailty who would not benefit from active and invasive treatment
• ‘highly satisfactory’ ratings from patient, family members and nursing staff

Conclusion
The Southcare Geriatric Flying Squad forms an important part of Sutherland Hospital’s strategy for improving patient’s access to timely, effective clinical care.

This requires excellent teamwork, collaboration with the Southcare services, Sutherland Shire General practitioners, nursing staff of residential aged care facilities, Sutherland hospital emergency team, community services, patients and their families.

References

Outcomes of Referral to Southcare Geriatric Flying Squad

- Total referrals 502
- Intervention 491
- No intervention 11
- Managed in RACF 434
- Acute care 353
- Subacute care 81
- Hospitalized 57
- Direct ward bed 30
- Via emergency 27
- Emergency transfer 4
- Cancelled by LMO 4
- Not appropriate 3