

The Power of Innovation

A health care system to meet our needs

NSW Health
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Volunteering as the vehicle to achieving the wellbeing of stroke / ABI patients Volunteer Service of the Year

Introduction

Through a volunteering program at Concord Hospital, improvements in quality of life issues of acute brain injury patients were attained in their physical, cognitive and communicative abilities, which assisted them in their rehabilitation journey.

Aim

To improve the emotional and psychological well-being of younger stroke patients with acute brain injury, by involving them in volunteering activities as part of their rehabilitation post discharge.

Method

Concord Hospital has a large stroke unit and the Rehabilitation Unit approached the Volunteer Service to discuss the feasibility of assisting in stroke patients' rehabilitation.

Discussions were held with the neurologists and rehabilitation specialist/team to verify the patient's health status as a starting point. Stroke victims and family members / carers attended an interview to discuss areas of interest and work history.

The individual was supported and reassured using a "buddy system". Respective managers were also involved in the support network.

When significant progress was observed, noted to be around 6-8 months, higher level activities were gradually introduced such as assisting with functions and special projects.

Results

This volunteering program helped individuals to fulfil their goals and reach their potential. With an improvement in an individual's feeling of self worth and confidence, they gained a more positive outlook to life and were less depressed.

This positive outcome flows over to their immediate family and relevant others as there is less stress and a more stable environment.

The program's aim 'to improve the emotional and psychological well-being of younger stroke / ABI patients' has been achieved with some individuals returning to work, others gaining more confidence in the community or pursuing a new lifestyle. Some have remained at the hospital continuing in their volunteer role.

Conclusion

Whilst this was only a small pilot project, it has achieved very positive outcomes for the patients and their family / carers. It has also been uplifting for the volunteers, as they have been able to support and encourage others in a positive way. This hospital has also benefitted by having additional resources to assist in a variety of roles.

Current plans are in place to extend this volunteering role to other stroke patients, as there have been demonstrable benefits with improvement in confidence, self esteem and self worth.

This program has assisted these individuals in striving to reach their full potential as valued, contributing members in the community.

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