

HALF A DOZEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT

DIGNITY IN DEMENTIA; IMPROVING CARE IN GENERAL HOSPITAL SETTINGS

CEM SUMMARY OF ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING NATIONAL PROJECT (2011)

<http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/practice/dementia>

1. Introduction

There are now 800,000 people with dementia in the UK and there are estimated to be 670,000 family and friends acting as primary carers. 44% of respondents said that professionals either only sometimes (28%) or do not (16%) involve them in decisions about their care and support. In addition, 46% of respondents said either that they only sometimes (25%) or never (21%) have a choice over the support services they receive. 47% of respondents felt that their carer is only sometimes (30%) or is not (17%) getting the support that they need to carry out their caring role. {Executive summary of Dignity 2012 Survey}

2. Dementia in acute hospitals

The National Audit Office reported in 2007 that each hospital could save an average £6 million a year by correctly identifying dementia patients, providing more appropriate and timely care, thus reducing length of stay and improving health outcomes.

SELECTED KEY FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL AUDIT OF DEMENTIA INTERIM REPORT:

95% of hospitals do not have mandatory training in dementia awareness for all staff whose work is likely to bring them into contact with patients with dementia

About one-third of patients did not have a nutritional assessment recorded during their admission

Fewer than one-half of patients received a formal mental status test upon admission to hospital

One-third of patients referred to in-hospital psychiatry liaison services not seen within 96 hours

Fewer than one in ten hospital executive boards regularly review readmission data for patients with dementia and only one in five regularly review information on delayed patient transfers

Casenotes results showed that 26% of hospitals did not carry out assessments of the carer's current needs in advance of discharge {Audit commissioned by HQIP}

3. Actions

RCN Project uses the mnemonic SPACE 'top five ingredients to support good dementia care

- Staff who are skilled and have time to care
- Partnership working with carer
- Assessment and early identification of dementia
- Care plans which are person centered and individualized
- Environments which are dementia friendly

4. In practical terms for the ED this means:

- Good quality training and education in dementia...easy to access and available to all staff...based on training needs
- Recognition and assessment of carers needs
- Use of agreed screening and assessment tools
- Clear delirium protocols...appropriate use of antipsychotic medication
- Use of mental capacity assessments
- Minimal moves to avoid unnecessary distress {RCN 'Dementia' leaflet}

5. Clinical advantages of this are:

If clinicians do not assess an older person's mental state when they are admitted to hospital, they might miss the fact that the person has dementia. Also, people who do have dementia are at greater risk of developing delirium. If clinicians do not assess cognitive function at admission, they might miss the subsequent development

of delirium. {HQIP audit}

Hospitals should routinely check and review how many people with dementia: have falls, make complaints, have delayed discharges or are readmitted soon after discharge. Unless this is done, hospitals cannot detect and address these issues that, as well as endangering patients, adversely affect efficiency and cost effectiveness of care {HQIP audit}

Staff working with people with dementia should be trained in effective approaches to extreme agitation or aggression in a person with dementia, including calming or distracting techniques. If this is not done it can lead to increased risk of the use of sedation and to inappropriate response to symptoms of other mental and physical health conditions or symptoms {HQIP audit}

6. References

<http://www.hqip.org.uk/assets/National-Team-Uploads/NAD-Interim-Final-Report2.doc>,

<http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/practice/dementia>, http://www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/405109/RCN_Dementia_project_professional_survey_findings_.pdf