

2021

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Ellis, Caroline

Ellis, C. et al. (2021). 'Improving proactive and preventative community-based dementia care from within the acute trust', South West Clinical School Journal, 1 (1).

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/19721>

<https://doi.org/10.24382/t5sm-xw62>

South West Clinical School Journal

University of Plymouth

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Quarter 1 2020/21 WINNER

#400WORDS: KNOWLEDGE+ACTION (IMPLEMENTING EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE)

Improving proactive and preventative community-based dementia care from within the acute trust

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Submission date: 16th June 2020 | Accepted for publication: 2nd July 2020

Background

The rising age of the population has led to a greater number of people with dementia being admitted into acute hospitals, with an estimated 1 in 4 hospital beds occupied by someone with a diagnosis (Timmons et al. 2016). When admitted to hospital, families affected by dementia are at higher risk of poor outcomes during and following a hospital admission (ADI 2016) and as a result of this, UK policy now aims to increase the provision and delivery of pro-active and preventative community-based care (NHS England 2019).

Method

In order to improve the provision of community preventative care and subsequently reduce the need for a hospital admission, the Admiral Nurse at Royal Cornwall Hospital has developed the Supporting Ahead Programme (SAP). SAP is centred around a 'holistic referral point' that provides access to a range of public, private and voluntary health care professionals who share information about their services and take self-referrals from families affected by dementia. SAP is a hospital-lead initiative but provides specialist dementia support to families at any point in the dementia pathway. SAP events run quarterly, enabling carers to come together to not only learn from professionals and access immediate support for their caring role, but also to share and discuss their own experiences, increasing peer support and reducing social isolation. Both quantitative and qualitative feedback has been collected via a written survey following each SAP session.

Results

The feedback has been positive and evidenced that SAP provides a safe environment in which people can access support, with 100% of attendees stating they felt comfortable and at ease during the session. The feedback provides evidence that SAP has contributed to an improvement in the health and well-being of the attendees, enabling carers and family members to create contingency plans, access peer support, share experiences, learn, and develop new strategies of coping. Family members and carers also fed back that they felt more resilient and were more likely to reach out to services for support that will enable them to stay at home in the community for longer.

Conclusion

The next step is to continue to grow the SAP community, increasing the number of sessions and as such, increasing the amount of support provided to families affected by dementia. At present, SAP is hosted at the main hospital site and at West Cornwall, however, due to the adaptability of SAP, the hope is to increase the dissemination of the initiative providing support and advice for families across different care sectors.

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