DEMENTIA AND DELIRIUM THE FOCUS OF NEW MEDICAL WARD

Alzheimer’s Australia’s latest figures show 2,832 people living with dementia currently reside across the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai electorates and these numbers are predicted to rise to 6,470 by 2050.

Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital is responding to this second leading cause of death among Australians with a strong focus on dementia and delirium care through a special unit incorporated into the relocated medical inpatient ward in the Lumby Building.

Sharon Strahand, Clinical Nurse Consultant Rehabilitation and Aged Care Services at Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital, said this would ensure the hospital treating patients already admitted for a medical purpose could have their dementia or delirium episode appropriately managed in a clinical setting as part of their overall treatment plan.

“Delirium is a medical emergency and needs a skilled workforce to prevent, diagnose, treat and manage it,” Ms Strahand said.

“There is growing evidence to suggest that delirium can increase the risk of dementia in the older population.”

The unit began operations on 1 March this year and since then has treated 51 patients with positive outcomes.

The Lumby Building was identified as the best location for the new dementia and delirium unit because of its circular design, which actually assists patients experiencing confusion.

The 10-bed unit is on the new medical ward, Lumby L2, and is decorated with striking colours to create an environment that is homely and calm, as well as providing easy orientation for patients.

Three single rooms have been created from former two-bed bays to allow space for a Carer who wishes to stay overnight and assist with care delivery.

The four-bed room have been changed to two-bed rooms, also allowing space for Carers to stay.

A four-bed bay has been transformed into an activity room, which can be used by patients for having their meals, watching movies and undertaking other personal activities.

Nurse Unit Manager Sarah Grace said the ward also had a newly painted mural depicting a bus stop with an actual bus seat for the use of patients. This creates a waiting place for people who wish to go home.

“Those that use it are usually happy to sit and wait until a different distraction presents itself to them and they move off again.

“It is perfectly located for the patients to be highly visible to staff on the ward,” Ms Grace said.

To ensure patients receive optimum care, the ward staff are being offered a range of education opportunities to enhance their skills.
The unit has also received community support including a $500 donation towards equipment from the Rotary Club of Hornsby, a television for the activity room kindly donated by The Good Guys Castle Hill, and fundraising from the Delirium & Dementia Staff and Pink Ladies through the Daisy for Dementia Cake and Flower Stall towards the mural.

Liesl McGrath, the hospital's Manager Fundraising and Volunteers, said the community contributions were greatly appreciated by the staff and patients on the ward.

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