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IMPROVING CARE FOR CONFUSED OLDER PEOPLE IN HOSPITAL

Gosford Hospital is one of the first in NSW to launch the new Confused Hospitalised Older Persons (CHOPs) program to improve care for older people with dementia and delirium.

The CHOPs Program is a partnership initiative of the Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI) and the National Health Medical Research Council Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre (CDPC).

CCLHD's Director of Clinical Governance Unit Dr Bruce Sanderson said the program is designed to improve the care provided to older people with dementia or delirium when they are admitted to hospital.

"Older people with dementia may experience significant distress, anxiety and increased confusion when admitted to hospital and removed from familiar people and surroundings," Dr Sanderson said.

"The CHOPS program has been developed to overcome some of these issues and improve the hospital experience of older people with dementia and delirium being cared for at Gosford or Wyong hospitals as well as for their families and carers."

The CHOPS program will improve patient care by educating staff to identify dementia or delirium earlier. It will equip staff with the tools and information required to tailor the care they provide and create a safe environment for these patients, their families and carers.

"It will also encourage healthcare staff to work closely with carers and families who have valuable insight into the older person's daily care and routine," Dr Sanderson said.

"This is an exciting project for Gosford Hospital which will make a real difference in improving the care we provide to older people."

ACI Chief Executive Dr Nigel Lyons said that dementia is the third leading cause of death in Australia, and the single greatest cause of disability in older Australians, and that the Central Coast is no exception.

"We are pleased to work with Central Coast Local Health District to implement this important new program," Dr Lyons said.

"The CHOPs program equips staff with the resources they need to improve the identification and management of patients with dementia or delirium in hospital."

Professor Sue Kurrle, Chief Investigator and CDPC Director explained that confusion in older people can increase their risk of medical and surgical complications.

"Patients who are confused are at increased risk of falls and functional decline, long hospital stays and increased re-admissions to hospital," said Professor Kurrle.

"Early identification of dementia and delirium, allows us to treat the underlying cause and manage symptoms, so that we reduce adverse effects, minimise their duration and severity and improve the emotional support and wellbeing of patients, carers and families," Professor Kurrle said.

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