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IMPROVING CARE FOR CONFUSED OLDER PEOPLE IN HOSPITAL

Lismore Base 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).

ACI Chief Executive Dr Nigel Lyons said that dementia rates worldwide and across Australia are increasing and that Lismore is no exception.

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

“The CHOPs program equips staff with the resources they need to improve the identification and management of patients with dementia or delirium in hospital,” Dr Lyons said.

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.

Lynne Weir, Executive Director of Richmond/Clarence Health Service Groups is responsible for the coordination and delivery of acute and community services across the district.

“This is an exciting project for Lismore Base Hospital which will make a real difference to the care provided to older people,” said Ms Weir.

The CHOPs program improves patient care by:

- providing practical tools and resources to help healthcare staff tailor care to the needs of individual patients, their carers and families
- increasing skills for healthcare staff to identify confusion early, so that it can be investigated, treated and appropriately managed
- supporting healthcare staff with the information they need to design and foster safe and supportive environments for older people with confusion, their families and carers
- encouraging healthcare staff to work closely with carers and families who have valuable insight into older people’s daily care and usual routine

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