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Conference Abstract

Sydney District Nursing: the common thread enabling integrated care

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Abstract

Sydney District Nursing is a community-based nursing service that is the common thread between acute and subacute services provided by Sydney Local Health District, referring specialists and general practitioners.

Sydney District Nursing has a catchment population of over 500,000 and provides general community nursing services, palliative care nursing, Hospital in The Home nursing and a consultancy service to residential aged care facilities.

Sydney District Nursing is ideally placed to facilitate continuum of care from hospital to home, avoid unwarranted hospital readmission and to model integrated care. Patients are treated in the convenience of their homes with minimal interruption to their daily routines, minimising the requirement to travel to appointments for those with mobility issues and enabling the connection with families, carers and support networks to be maintained. If physically able patients can return to work and receive care out-of-hours.

Pivotal to seamless coordinated care between acute services and the community setting is shared patient data.

The recent introduction of point-of-care access to electronic medical records (eMR) for Sydney District Nursing has seen significant gain for a relatively modest investment. New lightweight mobile devices with high-speed connectivity and network access are now standard issue to community nursing staff. The use of this technology has strengthened the integration of patient care between acute services and the community nursing service.

Clinicians are now able to review patient records from inpatient encounters at point-of-care. Community Nurses enter clinical assessments and progress notes during the home visit. Patient case management is supported by viewing scheduled outpatient appointments and scheduling future home visiting appointments.

Hospital clinicians now have contemporaneous clinical data for those patients being treated in the community and can review a patient's condition as data is entered by clinicians at point-of-care.

The recent introduction of activity-based funding to community health services in Australia means that the timely entry of activity data is crucial to ensuring adequate service revenue. Immediate entry of clinical information by nurses at point-of-care has improved the ease and accuracy of activity data reporting, with a 65% increase in the capture of indirect activity. Data entry at point-of-care has freed up clinical time and we have observed an 18% increase in direct clinical activity.

Patients report that the use of laptops by Sydney District Nursing staff is not intrusive, reassures them that their health record is secure and should be considered the 'norm' for all health care delivered in the home.

Future improvements using new technology are planned to support home-based care, including wound photography; the use of 'apps' for clinical assessment and health education and routine videoconferencing with general practitioners and specialists. In addition, point of care access to eMR will be rolled-out this year to other community-based services including mental health and aged care.

Such initiatives are being considered to further enhance the healthcare Sydney District Nursing is able to provide in the community, accommodate the needs of our patients and families, avoid hospital admission and to provide better integrated patient and family centred care.

Keywords

community-based nursing care; integration; technology

PowerPoint presentation

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