

WHY IS THIS A HEALTH PRIORITY?

Australia's population is growing and ageing population and with it comes an increase in disease burden and health care demand.

In the ACT, there are over 40,000 people aged over 65 years, which equates to over 13% of the resident population

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The increasing survival rates for chronic diseases means that the elderly population have greater incidence of major diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and musculoskeletal disorders, as well as suffering greater levels of disability. This places greater demand on healthcare, residential aged care facilities and other services across the region.

WHAT ISSUES HAVE WE IDENTIFIED?

Consultations raised a number of key issues associated with improving our health care systems for older people in the ACT. These include:



A lack of access to primary care for residents in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF).



Issues with medication management and support for older people through GPs, community pharmacy or in-place RACF staff.



The need for greater communication and awareness of end of life choices and management.

TARGET OUTCOMES

In acknowledging the health status of older persons in the ACT and addressing identified issues it is suggested that:



Improved access to primary care services for people in the aged care system be provided.



An increase in education opportunities for primary health care professionals and RACF staff around medication management and capacity building for consumers would improve medication safety.



Enhanced awareness of end-of-life care planning options can improve rates of people dying in their place of choice.

WHAT HAS THE DATA TOLD US?



The proportion and rate of ED presentations for older persons in the ACT is increasing (ACT Health, 2016).



There is a declining number of GPs attending appointments in RACFs and a lack of access to GPs for residents of RACFs (Capital Health Network, 2016).



Older people are more at risk of experiencing side effects from their medicines and because of difficulties with vision, hearing, memory or cognitive functions, managing medications for this group can be a lot harder (Government, 2015).



Hospitals remain the last preferred place of death but the most common place to die. An ACT survey found that 71% of respondents wished to die at home, however referral to end of life care by GPs and specialists is an issue. (ACT Health and Palliative Care ACT, 2017).

WHAT HAVE STAKEHOLDERS TOLD US?



There are significant issues around discharge processes from EDs and acute wards to RACFs.



Access to a GP once a person enters residential aged care is an issue.



There is poor health literacy among consumers about medication management.



Advanced care planning should be part of routine health care.



There is a need for more effective doctor-patient communication which will lead to better outcomes and satisfaction in regards to treatment.



Education for families, carers and RACF staff in end of life care is required.

References

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