

MEDIA RELEASE - 19 February 2019

Innovative aged-care pilot to expand across the ACT

Capital Health Network (CHN) welcomes the announcement from the ACT Government that a locally trialled innovative aged-care PHN program will now be expanded across the ACT through ACT Government funding. CHN commissioned Calvary Public Hospital Bruce to trial the PHN Geriatric Rapid Acute Care Evaluation (GRACE) Program in 2016 to provide expert, coordinated and collaborative health care to residents of five Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) in north Canberra.

Adj Prof Gaylene Coulton CHN Chief Executive said the successful PHN GRACE trial showed a decrease in transfers to the Emergency Department (ED), reduced acute in-hospital admissions and, where hospital admission is unavoidable, a decrease in average length of hospital stay.

"I'm very pleased to hear the PHN GRACE program will be extended on the northside and introduced to the southside of Canberra in April by the ACT Government. The program offers GPs, RACF staff, families and hospitals an alternative process designed to, where appropriate, have a patient's assessment and treatment undertaken in the patient's residential setting by the GRACE team of experienced nurses. I've seen how this can avoid an unsettling and unnecessary trip for the patient to ED," said Adj Prof Coulton.

Dr Joe Oguns, Medical Director at National Health Cooperative Charnwood, is a local GP who has patients who have been treated by the GRACE team and was on the project steering committee.

"Patients and families are reassured that the GRACE team can return the next day to conduct a review and keep their GP in the loop providing a good bridge between GP reviews. As the primary GP, I'm always kept in the loop and coordinate the clinical decision. For example, when I receive a clinical assessment from the skilled nurses in the GRACE team, I assess it and can provide a script for medication without visiting the patient for something like a urinary tract infection. This ensures that the patient receives the medication in a timely manner and saves me time," said Dr Oguns.

An independent review of the trial showed that Calvary Emergency Department clinicians and ACT Ambulance Managers interviewed were strongly supportive of the initiative. RACF staff interviewed were overwhelmingly positive reporting they considered hospitalisations had been averted. Very good feedback was received from patients and their families.

"This trial is a good example of how CHN works to ensure Canberrans receive the right health care in the right place at the right time. We assist GPs and other primary health care clinicians to improve the quality of patient care and keep Canberrans out of hospital," said Adj Prof Gaylene Coulton.

The GRACE Program was developed by the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital Service NSW. The ACT trial is supported by funding from the ACT PHN through the Australian Government's PHN Program. The trial was held in Kalparrin Aged Care Facility, Bill McKenzie Gardens, Calvary Haydon Retirement Village, Villaggio Sant'Antonio and Kangara Waters.

Capital Health Network requests that programs are acknowledged as a PHN Program e.g. PHN GRACE Program.

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