



21 August, 2017

For immediate release

TransforMED hospital care puts patients' health interests first

A new initiative at North Shore Hospital is designed to get older patients home and better quicker than ever before.

The newly-launched TransforMED project is sweeping its way through the hospital's Admission and Diagnostic Unit (ADU) as well as its general medicine wards.

It is designed to break an old mindset that bed rest is always good – steering patients clear of hospitalisation wherever possible and, in the best interests of their health, making sure those who are admitted to the wards don't stay any longer than necessary.

"To lie in bed and do nothing regularly is actually detrimental to your psychological and physical health," Waitemata DHB Acute and Emergency Head of Division Dr Gerard de Jong says. "We often see it with older people who have been doing just fine before some kind of medical event brings them to our attention.

"Put them in bed for a week and they may never get back to the same level of functioning that they had before. This kind of bed rest has, for many decades, been part of general concepts of care with the best of intentions. But it can, in fact, be incredibly hurtful to do that to people and we want to reduce it by getting patients out of hospital earlier with the appropriate aftercare in place whenever possible and feasible."

Dr de Jong says a key part of the TransforMED initiative is the interdisciplinary assessment process that now takes place through ADU.

It focuses on improved end-to-end care of frail, older adults who may be at increased risk of harmful deconditioning with continued hospitalisation and carefully considers if and when home care is a better option.

The system has already seen a 48% increase in the number of patients treated effectively and discharged on the day of admission – without the need to spend a night in a hospital bed.

"There is, in principle, a potential harm factor in any hospital admission that you should only accept if there is some sort of net gain to be achieved," Dr de Jong says. "And the only gain that justifies a hospital stay is a level of treatment or monitoring that cannot be provided in a

homecare situation. A person shouldn't be in hospital if these two things at least are not required."

Waitemata DHB General Manager Acute and Emergency Medicine Alex Boersma is among those involved with the project.

She says the majority of patients who do require hospitalisation end up on one of the hospital's general medicine wards.

Doctors have historically spread their efforts across all six of those wards but will now find themselves assigned to one particular ward as part of TransforMED.

"We are trying to improve the quality of care that people receive on those wards," Ms Boersma says. "Basing doctors in one ward will mean they get to work with the same staff all of the time. That means better communication and teamwork and a higher level of streamlined patient care.

"It also means more bedside time between doctors and patients. We worked it out and found that doctors under the old system actually spent 12 percent of their time walking around all six wards looking for their various patients. That lost time is far better spent on direct patient care aimed at getting people discharged earlier."

Patients are also actively encouraged to get dressed at the start of each day; to eat their meals sitting up and to walk wherever possible.

"This is most definitely a case of use it or lose it," Ms Boersma says. "Stop doing these things and your recovery will take far longer than it would if you are up and mobile.

TransforMED is being led by the hospital's Department of Medicine.

"We want to be proactive and live our organisational values," Ms Boersma says. "One of those values is to be better best and brilliant in all that we do.

"We want to give the best care that we possibly can and we think we can do this by streamlining our processes so that patients get seen, treated and sent home quicker – therefore ensuring they stay better for longer."

CAP: A TransforMED team in action, l-r Dr Indira Wickramasinghe, Dr Sheila Kaur, Dr Tina Chang, Consultant Physician Dr Steven Miller and registered nurse Kurt Navarro.

Ends

For further information contact:

Waitemata DHB Media Line

Ph. 4871276