Gympie’s elderly benefitting from early assessments

Clinical Nurse Consultant Patricia Rogers says the Geriatric Evaluation Management (GEM) nurse program provides an early intervention opportunity to assess and support older people with health issues who are living in the community or in residential aged care.

“Patients are assessed by GEM nurses in their home environment and this can make a big difference to their health outcomes. Some older people don’t cope well in the foreign environment of the hospital,” she said.

The GEM program is an early intervention community-based service designed to reduce the need for older people to present to hospitals for health related issues which could be better managed in their place of residence. These could include the management of behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia and self-care issues. The GEM service also offers support for carers who may be suffering from stress or fatigue by assessing situations and referring patients to appropriate resources.

“Patients, particularly the elderly, are more at ease in their own homes with familiar surroundings; our clinical assessments allow us to appropriately manage their health care needs,” she said.

Comprehensive electronic geriatric assessment (CeGA) data taken by the GEM nurse is compiled into a report which can then be accessed online by a Geriatrician, so they are familiar with the individual patient care needs before the consultation.

This multi-disciplinary approach means more patients can be seen and the time patients are waiting for an appointment is reduced.

The GEM nurse is directly linked to a geriatrician and can provide a free singular assessment visit for the older person.

To access the GEM service, contact your local geriatrician or general practitioner for a referral.

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