15 November 2018

**Breathe easy and live your dreams**

Around one in seven Australians over the age of 40 suffers from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), and hundreds of thousands of people across the country have COPD and don't know it.

The condition causes narrowing of the bronchial tubes in the lungs and this makes it difficult to breathe.

This **World COPD Day (21 November)**, Lung Foundation Australia is raising awareness of the symptoms of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and empowering people with COPD to take control of their condition because shortness of breath shouldn't stop anyone from living their dreams.

Jane Neill, Respiratory Clinical Nurse at Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service said the first symptoms of COPD tend to come on slowly, and can be very mild.

“People often mistake their symptoms as signs of ageing, lack of fitness or asthma. As COPD progresses, you may gradually find it harder to do your normal daily activities such as gardening, hanging out the washing, or carrying groceries without feeling short of breath.

“People in this category experience a reduced quality of life due to persistent symptoms, and are not taking important steps to slow down the progression of their disease.”

Sunshine Coast University Hospital introduced the Respiratory Acute Discharge Service (RADS) in June this year. This program will enable some COPD sufferers to be discharged home earlier than usual with a team of specialist nurses managing their care.

Ms Neill said: “The program has been tried in other areas of the country and has been found to be successful in reducing the amount of time patients who have COPD spend in hospital, therefore they can maintain their independence and avoid coming into contact with other virus’s.

“As of October, we have seen 117 patients, saving 443 days in hospital for this group of patients.”
One such patient is Mr Allan Partridge, a long-term COPD sufferer.

“RADS have provided me with a clear treatment plan and my wife Joy and I know we can always call if we are concerned or unsure. Last Sunday after I had contacted the team they came by and gave me a thorough review.”

“It makes having and managing a chronic condition less daunting. Knowing the team are on hand over the phone to give us advice is so comforting.”

“Also not having to dash off to the hospital, which can exacerbate my COPD, is great. And being able to stay at home and continue to enjoy the little things like watching TV in the comfort of my own chair or having a chat to the neighbours is invaluable.”

While COPD is a progressive and (currently) incurable disease, with the right diagnosis and treatment there are many things you can do to manage your condition and breathe better. People can live for many years with COPD and still enjoy a good quality of life.
MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

An interview and photo and opportunity with Respiratory Clinical Nurse Jane Neil will be available on request.

When: 19 November
Time: 10am
Where: SCUH main reception

Mr Allan Partridge and his wife Joy will also be available on request for comment on the RADs service and living with COPD.

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