

Media statement

7 January 2019

Locals looking after themselves

Sunshine Coast locals may be managing their chronic conditions better than other Queenslanders.

The 2018 report of Queensland's Chief Health Officer shows the rate of potentially avoidable hospitalisation due to chronic conditions in the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) area is 10 per cent lower than Queensland's.

Sunshine Coast Public Health Physician Dr Andrew Langley said that while this was a positive sign, we could do better.

"Of the 227,000 public and private hospitalisations each year in the Gympie, Noosa and Sunshine Coast council areas, 9900 admissions (four per cent) were due to a chronic condition and considered potentially avoidable.

"The chronic conditions that people were hospitalised for include angina, heart failure, complications from diabetes, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease which includes bronchitis," he said.

"The need for hospitalisation for these conditions can often be reduced by better management of the condition in the community, or even better, by preventing the condition from occurring in the first place."

SCHHS offers a range of community based services to support people with chronic conditions, and their carers, outside of the hospital setting. Eligible patients can access a range of support such as physiotherapy, social work, speech pathology, nutrition and psychology.

Recently, SCHHS has expanded the Hospital in the Home (HITH) program allowing more patients to access care in their own home. The program involves quality one-on-one service to eligible patients in the comfort of their own home, seven days a week.

HITH Clinical Director Dr Ted Chamberlain said HITH was the delivery of short term and after-hospital care in the patient's home, as a substitute for being in hospital.

"Patients tend to have improved recovery and outcomes at home, generally with fewer complications," he said.

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Nurse Navigators, also provide important support in the community for those with chronic conditions.

They are a team of registered nurses who work with patients with complex health conditions and require a high degree of comprehensive, clinical care. These nurses have an in-depth understanding of the health system to ensure patients access the right services at the right time. They act as a central point of communication, as well as helping patients to better understand their health conditions and enable them to self-manage.

Dr Langley said: “In a home or community setting we are well placed to help with self-management principles and assist patients to navigate the health care system in a holistic manner.

“Your family GP can be an excellent source of information and support for chronic conditions.”

Queensland Health also offers a free phone coaching service to help people with Type 2 diabetes, pre-diabetes, coronary heart disease, emphysema and chronic bronchitis to better manage their condition, and reduce the risk of future complications. Call 13 HEALTH (13 432584) for more information.

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