




The Need for Flexible Models of Care for Older People with Mental Illness

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- With the ageing of the population there will be more people with pre-existing mental illness living well beyond the age of 65, who will require both specialised mental health and aged care expertise.
 - Community Aged Care Services, traditionally base eligibility criteria upon aged related physical frail care needs and/or dementia;
 - Mental illness per se does not meet the eligibility criteria for existing Community Aged Care Services
 - Access Economics' Report, Caring places: planning for aged care 2010-2050 predict the following deficits in aged care supply:
 - Older people with a mental health illness who demonstrate minimal age – related frail care needs or dementia will fail to meet the Aged Care Community Services' eligibility criteria, and will find it increasingly difficult to access Aged Care Services.



A Flexible Approach to Service Delivery

- Develop comprehensive assessment protocols and processes, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, which are transferable across health care and service providers
- Establish regular client case conferences to support and promote early recognition of symptoms of mental illness
- Develop integrated models of care between mental health services, aged care services and primary health providers (including GP's), to address access to a range of flexible and holistic care and respite options
- Identify how to support people with mental health issues in their own environment for as long as possible
- Identify and incorporate assessment of a carer's capacity to provide support in individual care plans
- Assist carers to access support networks, services and educational opportunities



Improved Access to Services

- Improve quality and consistency of access to services by developing pathways , protocols and procedures to facilitate the process of transfer between services
- Establish networks between specialised older people's mental health services, for consultation, liaison advice, support and assessment
- Increase number of older people with mental illness accessing aged care services
- Investigate and remove barriers to access services
- Train relevant mental health professionals, service providers , consumers and carers in the use of videoconferencing technology



Service Delivery

- Holistic models of service
- Increased options and quality of service provision for older people with mental illness
- Flexible services that can meet the episodic and unpredictable nature of mental illness
- Educate the community about services available to older people including specialised mental health services , behavioural management support services, services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Foster key partnerships in delivering clinical and support services to older people and their carers
- Develop, pilot and evaluate evidence-based alternative models of care between mental health services and aged care services.



Factors that Obstruct Community Based Service Delivery

- If an older person has a; or develops mental illness this becomes an impediment to obtaining access to appropriate support services (ongoing or respite) in the community
- Service providers consider (officially or unofficially) that the presence of mental illness makes the person 'outside their scope'; fear that the presence of mental illness (even depression) may make the person dangerous or inappropriate for the service
- Most service providers are not funded nor are their staff skilled to manage symptoms of chronic mental illness
- Lack of support/ supervision and ongoing education for service providers in identifying and managing symptoms of Mental Illness
- Lack of support from referring services/lack of specialised Aged Care Mental Health Services to provide support and consultation as required
- Behavioural risk factors - OH&S concerns

OH&S Concerns – Environment





Improving outcomes for older people with a mental illness

Service providers role –

- Developing an understanding of mental illness
- Facilitate education/training on managing symptoms of mental illness
- Understand therapeutic interventions
- Equip staff with skills and techniques to deal with challenging behaviours associated with mental illness
- Deliver services that are flexible, person-centred and respond to the episodic nature of the person's mental illness



Developing models of appropriate community care for older people with a mental illness

- Services that are flexible and can accommodate the unpredictable nature of mental illness when increased care may be required
- A focus on socialisation and engagement in the community, as older people with mental health illness are often isolated due to symptoms of their mental illness, the associated stigma and poor interpersonal skills
- Assistance with the coordination of other service providers, such as the Department of Housing, Mental Health Services and the Public Guardian
- Establishing and maintaining partnerships between all stakeholders to reduce the risk of rehospitalisation



Service Providers will need to -

- Increase service choices for older people with mental health issues
- Understand therapeutic interventions
- Learn skills to assess risk factors and strategies for managing behaviours
- Be flexible and open to developing services aimed at meeting the gaps in services for older people with a mental illness
- Work with government and non-government , mental health, aged and community services to reduce the stigma of mental illness