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New program to help St George GPs manage heart failure

An innovative new program aimed at reducing hospitalisations of people with heart failure is being rolled out across GP clinics in the St George area in partnership with hospitals, nursing and allied health staff.

The Heart Failure Integrated Care Project was developed by the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District and Central and Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network in partnership with Novartis Australia to provide tools for GPs, nursing and allied health professionals to support the diagnosis and management of heart failure in the community and prevent unnecessary hospital presentations for heart failure patients.

St George Hospital is rolling out the project which is consistent with the NSW Health Integrated Care Strategy aimed at improving communication and connectivity between hospital, community and General Practice to improve patient care.

Glenn Paull, Nurse Consultant, St George Hospital, said the project supported primary health care providers such as Practice Nurses to effectively manage the increased need for care among the growing number of people with heart failure.

“The project will help improve communication between hospital and community-based care providers and be more fully integrated to better support patients to stay well and out of hospital,” Mr Paull said.

“The project is a long-term initiative to change the hospital’s approach to chronic disease management and the way it transitions care between the hospital and General Practice. It is also about improving accessibility and assisting GPs to navigate hospital services to improve patient care.”

Research shows that in Sydney, around 80,000 people are living with heart failure and more than 10,000 new cases are diagnosed each year.

Heart failure occurs when the heart can no longer pump sufficient blood around the body for normal physical functioning due to wear-and-tear or damage, to the heart muscle. It often develops after a heart attack and can result in fatigue, shortness of breath and difficulty walking.

Heart failure accounts for around 25,000 hospitalisation admission in Australia each year, equating to around 173,000 bed days.