

EPC Demonstration Project
Enhancing Discharge Planning
Hospital to GP Linkages
Central Gippsland Health Service

The Central Gippsland Health Service (CGHS) has joined the East Gippsland Division of General Practice (EGDGP) in an EPC Demonstration Project aimed at developing a process to facilitate the appropriate use of the EPC Medicare Benefits items. This is with a view to improving linkages between hospitals and GPs in discharge planning and care coordination for patients with chronic and complex conditions.

CGHS is the only rural health service involved in the Demonstration Projects. The geographical region covered by the health service is large, encompassing the entire Wellington Shire. For the demonstration project, this area has been extended to cover also the East Gippsland Shire area. The latter is served by the Bairnsdale regional Health Service, but generates many referrals to CGHS. The Wellington Shire, according to DHS's Burden of Disease Study 1999, has above average rates of chronic illness and complex medical conditions.

CGHS has many advantages due to the existence of an integrated model of care with acute and community care services located on the same campus. This has led to the established practice of case conferencing within some areas. However the use of EPC items has not been pursued or encouraged for many reasons.

The EGDGP is undertaking a series of clinic visits to encourage GP's to start using the items as appropriate for the occasion. The team will support these visits as much as possible.

Progress to date with the project has been slow despite much work by the project team. The GPs within the region have and exercise visiting rights and therefore have well established linkages with the hospital but there seems to be a cultural barrier to the adoption of use of EPC items.

Initiatives to date have involved the printing of information leaflets for GPs, patients and their families; visits to GP practices (although these have been few due to demands on GP time); education for ward staff and the printing of Nominated Doctor Advice Cards.

Positive developments are

- the improved recognition of discharge planning within the hospital work practices,
- reviews of most of the templates used,
- the study of and accepted necessity to revise, improve and implement IT/IM to track the patient through the processes in their treatment, ensuring that all possible safeguards are in place to prevent early and in-appropriate re admission.

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