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Does targetted assessment of function influence emergency department re-presentation in older adults: An Australian insight

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Publication Details

Bissett, M. & Cusick, A. (2012). Does targetted assessment of function influence emergency department re-presentation in older adults: An Australian insight. *Ageing Connects: IFA 11th Global Conference on Ageing - Book of Abstracts* (p. 183). Prague, Czech Republic: International Federation on Ageing.

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Abstract

Abstract presented at the IFA 11th Global Conference on Ageing, 28 May-1 June 2012, Prague, Czech Republic

Keywords

adults, australian, insight, assessment, targetted, presentation, does, older, re, function, department, emergency, influence

Disciplines

Education | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

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Abstract ID: 753

DOES TARGETTED ASSESSMENT OF FUCNTION INFLUENCE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT RE-PRESENTATION IN OLDER ADULTS: AN AUSTRALIAN INSIGHT

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Hospital emergency departments (EDs) in Australia provide universal and equal access to health-care services. Older adults accessing EDs present with a key medical problem in addition to a range of complex and chronic conditions that impact on their well-being. These include cognitive decline, mental health issues and functional impairment. Only addressing the presenting problem places patients at risk of adverse events including further health decline and/or re-presentation. Increasingly, there are attempts to address these co-morbidities in the ED. One model used in Australia is comprehensive free assessment of health factors beyond the immediate medical problem. Assessment of function and interventions to remediate functional problems are examples of this model in action. Following medical assessment, older adults are referred to ED-based teams where occupational therapists can assess and address any functional deficits. Although this approach is increasing nationally, the impact on ED re-presentation is unknown. As this service is free to patients, health administrators need to know if it impacts on rates of re-presentation.

Aim: To examine 12 month ED re-presentation rates for patients provided with occupational therapy assessment and intervention.

Method: Retrospective data was collected on patients who received ED occupational therapy over a three year period. Re-presentation patterns were compared to existing literature and contributing patient factors were examined.

Results: In total, 2200 patients received occupational therapy. Five percent re-presented in the first week and 42% re-presented at some point in the following year. Long term re-presentation rates were lower than previously reported literature. This paper will appraise the impact of occupational therapy on ED re-presentation and identify patient characteristics that contribute to this outcome. An indepth discussion will examine this model of practice and determine its value as part of the universal and equal access to health-care services provided in EDs.

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