Geriatric telemedicine and e-rehab at Toowoomba Hospital

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Introduction

In 2006–07 preliminary Strengthening Aged Care Project work identified a need for Health Services to provide a more specialised consultation service to meet complex geriatric care requirements. Subsequently an e-health and telemedicine model of service delivery has been implemented at Toowoomba Hospital (TH), Princess Alexandra and Redlands Hospitals. The following is an outline of the Toowoomba model.

- **Screening**
  - all hospital admitted clients aged 70 years or greater are screened using a seven item interRAI-Acute Care (AC) Screener. Based on the results patients are then referred to complete a full comprehensive assessment

- **InterRAI-AC comprehensive geriatric assessment**
  - trained nurse assessors apply the assessment and enter the results into an online database. A Report is then generated and sent to a geriatrician for a review. On completion of this it is then sent back to the nurse assessor and filed in the chart.

- **Geriatric Evaluation and Management (GEMs) ward rounds and multidisciplinary case conference**
  - daily input from on-site physicians and junior medical staff
  - weekly live video-conference (VC) ward round and ward meetings are conducted with geriatrician and multidisciplinary team via mobile, wireless connections
  - VC allows bedside interaction between the geriatrician and patient. It also enables the geriatrician to ‘perform’ various physical exams eg gait assessment, active range of motion etc as well as witness ‘hands on’ assessments by allied health, nursing and medical staff present at the ward round eg assessment of tone etc
  - the high resolution of the VC camera also allows for direct viewing of investigation results, drug charts, care plans and progress notes.

Implications for TH allied health

- Access to a specialist geriatrician enabling early identification of major geriatric syndromes, the formulation of problem lists, risk assessments and care planning suggestions.

- The geriatrician led multidisciplinary approach enables efficient and thorough implementation of treatment goals and discharge plans with clients being streamed into the appropriate care in a timely manner.

- Soon to be implemented “e-rehab” where outpatients on the Transition Care Program will have loan of a laptop with VC and software capabilities to enable therapists to perform objective assessments from remote sites eg gait analysis etc.
The future for rural and remote allied health

- Access for regional, rural and remote allied health professionals to experts in metropolitan areas.
- Improved working relationships between allied health professionals, geriatricians and other members of the multidisciplinary teams.
- Through the use of “e-rehab” patients in remote communities can access therapy that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

Presenter

Kassie Shardlow is currently working as the senior rehabilitation physiotherapist at Toowoomba Base Hospital where she has been working since January 2003. She has vast generalist experience but has recently focused her attention on aged care and rehabilitation. Kassie regularly provides clinical education to physiotherapy students as well as providing professional supervision and support to a number of local and some regional therapists and therapy assistants. She also is trained in Complex Lymphoedema Therapy and has an interest in orthopaedic physiotherapy.