CUH unit for frail and elderly patients now fully operational

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Over 80 per cent of very elderly people who attend ED at Addenbrooke's are admitted to a ward and the number of people in this age group is set to double in the next 20 years.

The Frailty and Acute Medicine for the Elderly (FAME) ward at Addenbrooke’s is part of a radical overhaul of the way the hospital cares for frail, older people, many of whom have dementia, now and in the future.

The new approach aims to cut down on the length of time people have to stay in hospital, the number of ward moves and readmissions.

Since the pilot project started in March, early results have shown that patients admitted to the FAME ward spend nearly two and half hours less in the ED than previously. In March the new ward was ranked the top ward for patient satisfaction.

Today the FAME ward, located right next to ED in EAU4, becomes fully operational with all 26 beds now available. The ward aims to ensure that frail, older people are transferred from the ED within an hour, and then assessed by a multidisciplinary team led by a senior clinician.

In addition to the new ward, a specialist team is being set up which integrates and builds on the success of current services providing care and support to the frail elderly. Operating seven days-a-week the Specialist Advice for the Frail Elderly (SAFE) team, comprised of senior nurses and therapists, will raise the quality of care for elderly patients throughout the entire Trust by embedding education, training and support for all staff.

The new system of care also includes a pre-operative assessment service. This will identify ‘at risk’ frail elderly patients due to undergo planned surgery, and intervene to ensure they are in the best possible health for their operation and thereby improve their outcomes.
“The treatment that I've had on this ward has been absolutely excellent, first class. Everyone seems to know exactly what they're doing, it's a very professional team.” - Dennis Gration from Whittlesford

Stephen Wallis, consultant geriatrician at CUH, said: “This integration of services for frail, elderly people provides an opportunity to develop a strong backbone to the frail elderly pathway throughout the Trust. The FAME ward is one part of this and is already proving very successful in getting people home quicker and reducing the pressure on ED. This is down to the dedication of staff and excellent nursing care available.

“The specialist geriatric assessment we provide looks at the whole person. We don’t only focus on the serious health issue they have come into hospital with, but we look at it in the light of the patient’s other physical, psychological and social needs.”

“Excellent communication, highlighted in the Francis Report, is at the heart of effective care for older people. The new SAFE team will further improve our communication with families, carers and community services because we are taking this holistic approach. Gathering and exchanging this type of information helps us to provide the best care possible.”

Dennis Gration from Whittlesford said: “The treatment that I've had on this ward has been absolutely excellent, first class. Everyone seems to know exactly what they’re doing, it's a very professional team."