

“Get Up and Get Dressed” Frailty care on a surgical ward

20
YEARS OF
NICE
1999-2019

A new frailty pathway was established on a busy surgical ward in Ipswich, to prevent older patients from losing physical strength and becoming deconditioned whilst in hospital. The “Get Up and Get Dressed” initiative aimed to reduce the length of stay in hospital for patients, and give them personalised daily goals to regain their function and leave hospital with confidence and independence.

“Preventing deconditioning requires us to promote activity and independence from the time of admission.”

Dr Amit Arora, Consultant Physician and Geriatrician, University Hospital of North Midlands admissions



What we did and why

In 2017, as a ward we identified that the length of stay for frail patients was high and they were often not discharged to their previous home without an increased care package, transfer for rehabilitation or discharge to a care home.

So a new initiative to support reablement was launched on the Lavenham surgical ward. It aimed to improve patient flow on the ward by implementing simple ideas to build up patients' function, including “Get Up and Get Dressed”, “Get Up for Breakfast” and “Walk to the Bathroom for a Wash, Not by Your Bed”.

The programme was led by the ward sisters and Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), and educated staff, patients, families and carers about reablement and recognising and understanding frailty.

Now, patients' levels of frailty are assessed on admission. The senior nurse leads a daily huddle at the patient's bedside with therapists and a frailty nurse consultant to ensure the patient is informed of their daily goals.

An ‘at a glance board’ ensure that everyone involved in a patient's care can play their part in reducing deconditioning.

Outcomes and impact

The length of stay for frail patients has reduced by an average of 2.04 days. Patient experience has improved with daily updates and better communication with staff. The team audited prior to, and during, the project with a simple survey and the results were staggering: patients have a significantly improved feeling of motivation and involvement in their reablement; staff are actively involved in plans for mobility; and patients are encouraged to be independent and involved in their own care.

We held afternoon tea events to educate patients, staff and carers/families on dementia, nutrition and hydration, help for carers and reducing the risk of falls. All were well attended and have enabled the MDT to improve confidence among patients, families and carers. Relationships have also been strengthened with the Hospital User Group, Suffolk Family Carers and Chaplains.

Staff's approach to care has changed: they feel empowered to encourage patients to go to the bathroom and support them to get dressed themselves. Staff have been motivated to make further suggestions for improvements to the pathway. Reducing deconditioning is no longer the ward sister's project but one where the whole team has input.

What we learnt

Early engagement and staff training was key to the progress and success of this project. It has been paramount in maintaining standards as well as changing overall attitudes towards how we care for patients. Using “Get Up and Get Dressed” and the other initiatives as our monthly themes enabled us to embed them into everyday practice. We also included the MDT throughout the process which proved pivotal in the success of our work.

It has, at times, been challenging when patients feel they are being told to get up and dressed earlier than they should. Having staff on board with the initiative was vital to countering this resistance and encouraging patients not to become deconditioned.

Ward Champions who prompt staff and educate new starters has also been important in our success.

This project is being rolled out across the trust and presentations have been given to senior nurses as well as individual teaching to students/new starters. Attending conferences locally and nationally has enabled networking as well as sharing our practice more widely. Nursing colleagues in other trusts have expressed interest in implementing and developing the project within their own area.