

Far from a perfect world: responding to elder abuse at the Royal Melbourne Hospital

Rebekah Kooge

Social Work Department-Royal Melbourne Hospital

In June 2012, The Royal Melbourne Hospital's Social Work Department led the development a new organisation-wide procedure addressing the growing issue of elder abuse. This procedure was paramount in enhancing people's awareness and knowledge of an issue that unfortunately affects some of our elderly patients.

With the introduction of this procedure, Social Work provided education sessions that enabled staff to detect abuse, and to respond appropriately. These education sessions gave staff confidence and clear guidance when dealing with abuse and the opportunity to discuss such a sensitive issue in a safe environment with the support of their wider team.

As part of the procedure, cases are now reported and tracked, and Social Work are able to reflect and on feedback their findings on common issues, types of abuse, and the outcomes of these cases.

One year after the introduction of the procedure, a research project was developed to review medical records of these cases, and to look into the different aspects of the patient experience, including demographics and the care the patient received throughout the process.

By June 2014, there will be 2 years worth of data collected, and the Social Work Department will be able to inform further education and training for all staff, and as a consequence, enhance the patient journey.

This presentation will summarise the wider outcomes that occurred when the procedure was introduced, and will review the findings of the research project. It will also look at how the policy has shaped our practice in detection and intervention and offer insights for others looking to respond to this complex and sensitive area of practice.