

# Improving hospital care of people with dementia

## Ideas for supporting carer relationships

People with dementia may have a memory span of 30 seconds, and may forget why they are in hospital. They may try to find a familiar face or place, by walking out. Improving care for people with dementia is about cultural change, continuing education and involving families and carers.

Here are some ideas for you to consider for supporting carer relationships, both with hospital staff and with the person they care for. These ideas may suit some carers better than others.



### Communicate with carers...

When their loved one is being admitted to hospital, carers may wish to let the staff know about their:

- preferred name
- personal likes and dislikes that may affect their eating, comfort and sleeping
- abilities
- habits and normal routines
- behaviours and the best way to respond to them.

Some carers may have the chance to write some notes, or type them, or get someone else to do this. The carer can then give the hospital a copy and keep one themselves.

### Listen to carers' concerns...

Carers may be unclear or concerned about the details of:

- assessment
- diagnosis
- hospital processes
- treatment options
- how long their loved one will stay in hospital
- future care needs.

They may want to seek an appointment with the doctor, specialist or nurse to discuss their concerns more fully.

All hospitals have a Patient Representative, who can assist carers. Many hospitals have Veteran Liaison Officers (VLOs) for carers of veterans, who can assist with any concerns or questions.

### Assist carers to provide feedback...

If a carer is not satisfied with their hospital experience, they can let their concerns be known. Let the carer know what hospital processes there are to do this:

- Discharge and Community Linkage Advisory Group
- Discharge Liaison worker
- Quality Assurance worker.

Complaints can also be made to the Office of the Health Services Commissioner, Freecall 1800 136 066.

### Confirm with carers what happens after hospital care...

Some carers may worry about what's going to happen when their loved one leaves hospital, and how they will continue to care for them. Let them know they can speak with the hospital's Social Worker, to explore care options.

Before discharge, fill in the Carers Discharge Kit (available from Carers Victoria on Freecall 1800 242 636). Discharge planning includes:

- a realistic estimate of discharge date and time
- understanding the medication, how much to take and when
- making sure the patient's local doctor gets a discharge summary
- knowing how to obtain necessary equipment and medical supplies after the patient leaves hospital.

### Other carer support resources...

Provide information about other carer support resources, services and information, or how a carer can have an informal chat about what's going on with people who understand.

Carers can contact:

- Alzheimer's Australia Vic on Freecall 1800 639 331
- Carers Victoria on Freecall 1800 242 636.

This sheet is one of a four-part series, Improving hospital care of people with dementia. See also 'Ideas for managers on culture change', 'Ideas for managers on education' and 'Ideas for staff'.

Full evaluation report and 'Ideas' series available at [www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/)

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