Central Coast Companion Observer and Volunteer Feeding Programs

Jamie Gills
CNC Dementia/Delirium Rehabilitation and Aged Care Division
Purpose

- To develop a Companion Observer and a Volunteer Feeding Program on the Central Coast and to trial the use of volunteers in an Acute Aged Care ward.
Working party

- Jamie Gills-CNC Dementia/Delirium (Project Manager)
- Diane Wood-Volunteer Manager
- Rachel O’Neill-CNC Aged Care
- Deborah Cowler-CNC Aged Care
- Vicki Wilson-NUM-Wyong M1
- Rachael Willmott-CNE-Wyong M1
- Laurie-Ann Minslow-Senior Speech Pathologist
- Jessica Thodas and Kate Clarke-Dietitians
Volunteers needed for new programs

ALISON BUCKLAND

Volunteers are needed to help care for some of the most frail and special needs patients in Central Coast hospitals.

Two new volunteer programs will be tested at Gosford and Wyong.

“The volunteer feeding program will focus on patients who have difficulty feeding themselves and would greatly benefit from people willing to give them a helping hand,” Wyong Hospital nursing director Jan Tweedie said.

“The companion observer program is exactly that. People who are willing to sit with those patients, particularly the frail elderly, who may be alone and whose wellbeing would be improved by having someone—a companion—to talk to,” Ms Tweedie said.

Hospital volunteer manager Diane Wood said volunteers should be caring, patient and friendly.

“We are very fortunate in that we already have many volunteers who assist in so many ways in our hospitals. They make a huge contribution to both staff and patients,” she said.

Interested people have to complete an application and undergo a criminal record check. If successful they will be trained for the role.

“We do not expect volunteers to put in long hours. Their contribution can be as little as a couple of hours a day, once or twice a week,” she said.

Inquiries: 4394 8088.
Volunteer orientation program

- Roles and responsibilities of Companion Observers
- Person centered care
- How to feed a patient safely and effectively
- The importance of adequate nutrition
- Understanding dementia and delirium
- Communicating effectively with the person with sensory impairments
- Activities for enjoyment and pleasure
- Commencing as a Companion Observer, documentation and evaluations
Excluded patients

- Any patients with behavioural issues which potentially will place the Volunteer at risk and where patient or carer consent has not been obtained.
- Patients who are on a red placemat.
Results after 10 months

- Of patients requiring assistance, 56% of these received assistance prior to implementation of the programs. This increased to 76% post implementation of the programs.

- Nursing staff went from providing 55% of assistance to patients at meal times before implementation of the programs, to 38% post program implementation.

- Prior to implementation of the programs, 61% of patients that needed assistance had to wait more than 15 minutes for this assistance or never actually got any assistance. This decreased to 25% of patients after implementation of the programs.
Patients consuming ≥3/4 of the meal was not shown to vary significantly from before and after implementation of the programs (i.e. 53% vs 51%).
Summary

- Minimal difference seen in both the number of patients who require assistance that actually receive this assistance and waiting time for this assistance with the presence of volunteers.

- However, the percentage of patients that ate ≥ ¾ of a meal was 66% (2 volunteers) vs 55% (no volunteers).
Other results

- No **falls** incidents were documented on IIMs with patients in the program when volunteers were present with the patient.
“...... I feel as if I have made a difference to a person’s day and meal enjoyment”
“...... Seeing someone smile and appreciate the company.”

“...... Feeling I am doing something valuable and worthwhile.”
“...... I feel I have spent time with some wonderful people.

....you can make their day a happy day.”
“...... it’s good to reassure people and to see them laugh.”
“…… My husband died in hospital two months ago and I saw patients struggle everyday with just little things.……

…… the nurses are just so busy.

When I saw the ad I knew this is what I wanted to do.”
“…… Makes me feel like I am making a difference in a small way to their life.”

“…… I love it. I look forward to coming in.”
“To often we underestimate the power of touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around”

Leo F. Buscaqlia (1924-1998)
References


