

Case Study:

Introducing a Meaningful Activity Service

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust

Summary

In University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, a new service providing Meaningful Activities is changing the course of how they care for people with dementia.

Over a twelve month period, the Meaningful Activity Service supported 730 patients with cognitive impairment. Qualitative data suggests the service is reducing costs, both human and financial, associated with malnutrition, dehydration, falls and fractures, delirium and challenging behaviour, and is reducing length of stay in hospital.

Key facts

- The Meaningful Activities service implemented by Leicester Hospitals aims to support people with dementia during their hospital stay to improve wellbeing, promote dignity and reduce hospital stay
- Meaningful Activities Facilitators are part of multi disciplinary teams receiving referrals at board rounds
- Building a detailed patient profile, Meaningful Activities Facilitators improve carer involvement and communication
- Meaningful Activities Facilitators provide practical training for staff, volunteers and students in clinical practice as well as educating carers.

The issue

Approximately 1 in 4 older people in acute hospitals suffer from dementia. On a typical day at Leicester Hospitals there can be up to 120 patients with a known dementia. People with dementia are highly vulnerable to illness, accidents and falls, all of which can extend their stay in hospital. The support required by this patient group when in hospital, expands to physical, mental and social needs to ensure that patient stay is not prolonged.

The proposed solution

Meaningful Activity can improve the well-being of people with dementia, as well as promoting a closer working relationship with their carers. It provides an opportunity for cognitive stimulation, supporting physical, sensory and psychological well-being, as demonstrated nationally^{1,2,3}

¹SCIE, 2013: Dementia Gateway: Keeping active and occupied <http://www.scie.org.uk/dementia/living-with-dementia/keeping-active/index.asp>

²NICE, 2011: Supporting People with Dementia and their Carers in Health and Social Care. Quick Reference Guide. London: NICE <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/10998/30317/30317.pdf>

³Pool, J. 2008: *The Pool Activity Level Instrument for Occupational Profiling - A Practical Resource for Carers of People with Cognitive Impairment*. Bradford Dementia Group. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

A pilot to deliver Meaningful Activity in 2011-2013, prompted a new initiative to develop Meaningful Activities into a unique individualised service.

In September 2013, three Meaningful Activity Facilitators were appointed using part charitable funds and CQUIN monies. They are an additional service to older people's wards at Leicester Royal Infirmary to help improve the well-being of people with dementia and their carers.

A Meaningful Activity Facilitator is a Band 3 role. They are experienced Health Care Assistants and or Occupational Therapy Assistants who have worked in the acute setting with people with dementia, older people or mental health. They also have additional experience in arts, music and activity coordinating.

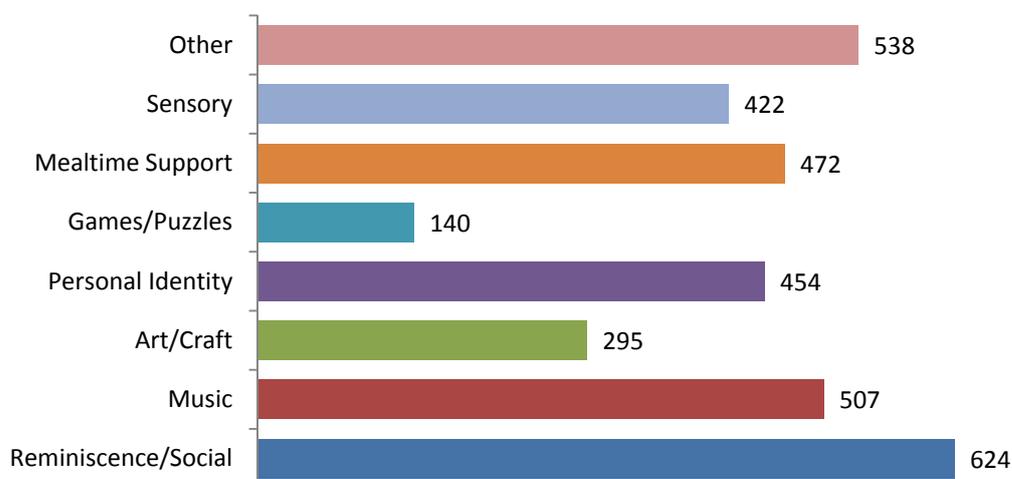
The Meaningful Activity service is managed by the Patient Experience Team and has been aligned to current therapy service models, whereby they attend the board round with members of the Multi-Disciplinary Team in the morning. People with dementia are referred to them by a Doctor, Nurse or MDT and highlight key areas for them to focus upon during activity. This can include, improving nutritional intake for patients refusing to eat or drink, reduce agitation, support 'safe wandering', provide support with procedures such as cannulation, x-rays and blood taking, provide personal identity, improve functional abilities and engaging with carers.

The outcome

From October 2013 to September 2014, the Meaningful Activity Service supported 730 patients (and their carers where relevant) through activity, of which;

- 601 patients had a confirmed dementia diagnosis of dementia
- 71 patients had a suspected diagnosis of dementia
- 58 patients with other conditions, including, depression, learning disabilities, neurological conditions, i.e. Parkinson's Disease

Patient contacts for activities undertaken: October 2013 - September 2014



Evaluation of the services highlighted the following key themes:

- Over 80% of patients referred were either assisted or prompted with their nutritional intake during or as part of an activity
- 91% of those referred to the service, had a positive change in well being and behaviour noted after being involved with meaningful activity
- 354 carers were actively involved with activities
- In 72% of cases referred techniques such as distraction, mirroring and orientation through visual prompts were used to achieve change in behaviour and reduction in agitation and aggression
- 295 patients were made more comfortable through recognition of pain and behavioural changes
- 43% of patients when referred to the Meaningful Activity Service were identified as being at high risk of falls. Time spent with patients through activity reduced the incidences of actual and potential falls.

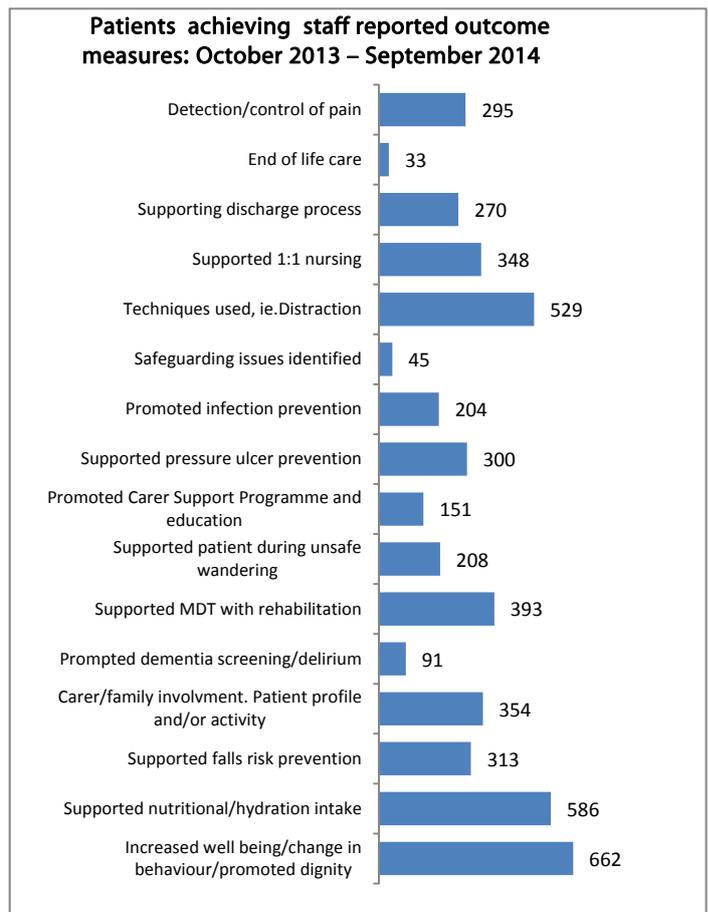
Outcome measures

Patient support codes were developed to measure the impact of the Meaningful Activity Service. These were carefully compiled based on staff feedback as to which areas the service had the greatest impact.

Comments reported by staff and the outcome data collected suggest the Meaningful Activity role is supporting Medical, Nursing and Multidisciplinary patient care plans including:

- Improving wellbeing and reduction in challenging behaviour
- Increase flow of discharge
- Prompting dementia screening and delirium
- Increase in nutritional intake and hydration
- Improving carer and family involvement
- Detection of pain
- Safe guarding and unsafe wandering
- Pressure ulcer prevention
- Reduction of anti-psychotic medication
- End of life care
- Reduction of falls

Staff have also reported the Meaningful Activity Service is having a positive effect on other the experience of other patients who do not have dementia. This is due to facilitators focusing on activities which distract people with dementia who may be challenging towards other patients on their ward.



Carer and patient feedback

Improving carer involvement is evident in particular with completion of a detailed Patient Profile and Carer satisfaction surveys. Locally, a Meaningful Activity Survey has been given to carers and family members to review the service. A total of 130 responded to the questionnaire, of which;

- 96% thought that their family members experience in hospital had been improved by the Meaningful Activities Service
- 96% thought that appropriate activities were provided
- 82% were 'Extremely likely' and the other 18% 'Likely' to recommend the Meaningful Activities Service to others

Common themes from free text comments from carer feedback highlighted:

- they have seen a "significant improvement" in the patient's well-being;
- patients are "feeling the benefits" of having a Meaningful Activity Facilitator involved in the patients care

Patient Story –

A patient with dementia was wandering on the ward being verbally aggressive, (often 'lashing out to staff') whenever someone would pass her. The Meaningful Activities Facilitator approached her with caution and momentarily was able to talk to her, building up trust and finding out she worked in hosiery and loved to knit. Although no longer able to knit, due to her arthritis, she was asked for her much needed help to unravel two balls of tangled wool. During this time, the lady had talked about how confused she was with all these 'strange' people around that when they walked past her, ignored her and avoided eye contact. Doctors, Nursing and Multi-Disciplinary Team were asked if they could give the lady a quick wave and say hello whenever they walked past or she looked over. The impact of doing this had a dramatic effect on her wellbeing. Within one hour, discussions of booking extra supervision and possible security along with prescribing medication to help 'calm' the lady down' had ceased.

Added Benefits

Meaningful Activity Facilitators provide practical training for staff, volunteers and students in meaningful activity in clinical practice and inductions as well as educating carers. This service which is currently not a model used in acute hospital settings has resulted in overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Feedback was collected from 15 MDT members across the 6 wards covered by Meaningful Activities Facilitators including Consultants, Doctors, Nurses and Therapy staff and nearly all felt that the input from Meaningful Activity Facilitators had improved the experience of people with dementia whilst in hospital. Many staff report that they have gained a greater understanding of the needs of someone with living with dementia.

"There has been an improvement in their mood and well-being which is visible and commented on by families. It has helped reduce some potentially challenging behaviour"
Consultant

"I appreciate having an MA on the ward, has improved the care so much. I personally have learnt so much in caring for patients with Dementia"
Ward sister

"Patients are more relaxed, settled. They feel they belong and that they feel wanted. They enjoy themselves with smiles on their faces"
Physiotherapist T13

"I have learnt more about dementia in spending a morning with a meaningful activity facilitator and her patients than I have done throughout my nursing course".
Student nurse

Additionally in the past 12 months, 28 'Forget me not' Volunteers have been trained in dementia awareness and meaningful activity. Volunteers have supported 'Memory Lane' afternoon events that have taken place on many of the older people wards, complementing and increasing the interaction with patients.

The lessons learnt

Challenges of introducing the service primarily came from non-professionals. In most cases, this was due to misunderstanding of the role of the facilitator. Early introduction of the service saw facilitators called upon to cover nursing duties such as supervising 1-1 high risk falls for non-cognitive impaired patients, toileting, washing and dressing patients. In addressing these challenges, Ward Sisters provided fantastic support to the facilitators by educating their teams and promoting the unique individualised service.

In order to gain board support for developing the service, it was important to clearly demonstrate and articulate the value that it provides to patients and staff. This was done effectively by using patient stories.

For the success of the service, personal qualities of the Meaningful Activity Facilitator as well as experience and professional skills are very important.

Future Plans

Following a review of high volume ward areas where patients with dementia are admitted to, the Meaningful Activity Service has expanded to cover 10 wards from January 2015. There are now 9 Meaningful Activity Facilitators and a Team Leader (band 6).

In addition, the service will be piloting an 'Out Reach' support and advisory service at the Leicester Royal Infirmary to support staff who may require additional information or guidance in caring for patients with dementia. Any ward will also be able to access the service to organise 'Memory Lane' afternoon events on their wards on a pro rota basis where requested.

Conclusion

Members of Trust Board, Leicester Hospitals Charity Committee and the Alzheimers Society have been overwhelmingly supportive of this initiative. Furthermore, a recent Care Quality Commission visit in 2014, highlighted the Meaningful Activity Service in their report as an area of good practice.

Contacts

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