

On the right track: Peter Macs response to optimising cancer care for older patients

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Background

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre (Peter Mac) is seeking to optimise care pathways for older patients by exploring and developing new projects and initiatives.

As part of Peter Mac's commitment to the provision of *World's Best Patient Care*, we have recently established the 'Older People with Cancer Working Group'. It has been instigated to enhance the quality and experiences of care of older people with cancer.

Method

One of the first actions of the Working Group is to address the complex and sensitive issue of Elder Abuse. Peter Mac's Social Work Department led the development of a new organisation-wide procedure that provides a clearly defined pathway to assist clinical staff to identify cases of elder abuse and provide consistent, sensitive and timely responses to individuals. An organisational education package to increase staff knowledge and confidence in responding to Elder Abuse is being developed.

A current scoping project aims to identify patterns in referral, treatment, admission and discharge planning for Peter Mac's elderly patient population. Through identifying these patterns, and recognizing areas that require increased assessment and intervention, it is anticipated that a further project will be developed to ensure Peter Mac's elderly patients are as well-prepared and well-supported as possible throughout the scope of their treatment trajectory.

Discussion

Cancer is more prevalent in older people and with the ageing Australian population, the issues related to cancer care in the older patient will become more prominent. The care of older patients is unique and needs to consider differences in physiology, co morbidity burden and psychosocial issues. Recognising this difference in need is vital and underpins the provision of individualised, patient-centred care.

This presentation will report on the development of the program of work being undertaken at Peter Mac to address the needs of older people with cancer and identify priority areas for action.