

HeLP- A partnership between social worker and lawyers, improving patient outcomes and health.

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Background

In the United States, medical health legal partnerships (MLPs) have emerged as an increasingly popular model care, currently operating in 276 healthcare institutions in 36 states. In March 2014, Alfred Health established an MLP called, HeLP (Health Legal Partnerships) Patient Legal Clinic, which has seen over 300 patients, providing free legal advice and referrals to patients and their families with health related issues.

Method

The presentation will describe the ground breaking service, the first of its kind (in Australia) in terms of the breadth of the services it offered to patients and their families during acute hospital admission. The integrated model of care operates according to the MOU executed by Alfred Health, Maurice Blackburn, Monash University and Justice Connect. Lawyers are imbedded in the social work team and collaboratively work with healthcare team to address specific legal problems identified during a patient's admission into hospital. The program has 2 levels of service provision; primary and secondary consultations.

Results

An analysis of the patients and the service will be discussed. When identified in a healthcare setting, legal problems can be detected earlier, enabling prevention of crises and achieving better outcomes for patients and their families. Case vignettes will also be used to further elaborate and demonstrate the impact of this unique symbiotic relationship for enhanced patient outcomes.

Discussion

The presentation will also highlight the critical role of social workers in the development and operation of this service, in particular, focusing on the evolving relationship between the social workers and lawyers. Challenges and opportunities will also be highlighted.