

‘Think Frailty’

UHMBT Frailty Service trials seven-day Frailty Patient Pathway

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The UK’s population is ageing and, in the North West, it is estimated that our over 75s population will increase by 25.4% over the next 10 years.

Without change, this increase will place significant strain on our health services both in and out of hospital.

To look at solutions to this problem, the Inpatients Transformation team at the Trust with support from Neil Smith, Deputy Associate Director of Operations for Medicine, Mel Woolfall, Associate Director of Nursing for Medicine and Mark Taylor, Consultant and Clinical Lead for Frailty, have proposed a ‘Think Frailty’ month where service changes will be trialled and their effectiveness evaluated.

The aim of the Think Frailty trial is to demonstrate the benefits to frail and older patients of early assessment and intervention from an extended Frailty Service. The trial will look to understand how different patient pathways work in practice and what staffing is required to provide a more effective service.

This is an ambitious test being carried out during uncertain times with increased demands on acute services due to COVID-19 and requires support and co-operation from teams across the pathway of care for our frail patients.

The trial of the Frailty Patient Pathway will be at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary (RLI) for the four-week period starting on Monday 19 October to coincide with the national FAB Change Day on Friday 21 October.

The pathway includes operating a seven-day, consultant-led service from 8am to 8pm, within the existing Acute Frailty Unit (AFU) footprint, including:

- A Frailty Intervention Team (FIT) approach where the AFU, supported by integrated Therapists, Pharmacists and Advanced Nurse Practitioners will reach into the Emergency Department (ED) and actively gather frail and older patients for assessment. The FIT approach is based on a similar best practice model currently operating at Hull University Teaching Hospitals and will have a significant impact on admission reduction (an estimated 31% reduction) as

well as free up capacity within the ED team through a reduced need to assess Frail and older patients.

- Increased hours of cover on the AFU which will incorporate additional dedicated Therapy support over the full week and Pharmacy support Monday to Friday. These changes will enable weekend Consultant reviews of our frail and older patients on AFU and with the incorporated additional dedicated support services, will aim to increase discharges and reduce occupied bed days.

Throughout the trial, it is likely that there will be things that will prove challenging in practice and require quick action to learn lessons and improve upon as we go. There will also be further engagement with our clinical teams outside of Frailty to understand how their service works for them to learn further lessons on where the Frailty Service could improve.

All we ask is for your commitment to be part of and support this trial where you can, sign up to actions as required in your role and to continue to help care for our frail patients as best we can.

For any queries on 'Think Frailty', please contact Scott Bremner via email at: scott.bremner@mbht.nhs.uk