

Trust thinking innovatively to make improvements in A&E

United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust has introduced a pharmacist into the emergency department at Pilgrim hospital to help improve the care of patients, including the frail and elderly, as part of a raft of improvements to A&E.

Lincolnshire has a high proportion of older and frail residents with the associated healthcare needs and conditions. At Pilgrim Hospital in Boston, a new frailty team is meeting patients aged 65 and over who come to the emergency department and are identifying those who may be frail or need additional support. They look to see if any plans can be put in place to help in the patient's recovery and prevent any future visits to hospital. This follows the success of a similar scheme at Lincoln County Hospital.

A trial has also seen a pharmacist join the team to review existing medication being taken by older patients and anyone being admitted to a ward. They are also able to make sure patients can get their regular medication on time while in the department. Statistics show around 7% of hospital admissions are due to the adverse effects from taking a medication.

Pharmacist Lisa-Marie Moore said: "I see all patients that are going to be admitted to a ward and also review and write up drug charts. The whole department is working together to do what we can to provide the best possible patient care, and my input is from a medicine perspective. The work that the frailty team are doing, as well as the pharmacy side, is really starting to have an impact and is so much better for our frail and older patients."

These are great examples of where the Trust is using the expertise of its staff in new and innovative ways where they can have the most impact.

Last year, 20,531 people aged 65 and over were seen and treated by the A&E team at Pilgrim hospital.

ULHT Consultant Nurse for Frailty Deborah Birch said: "We have got an aging population in Lincolnshire, particularly along the east coast, and this is expected to continue to rise. We need this focus and expertise in our hospitals to make sure we can identify patients who are frail and also have the links in place to refer them to our colleagues in the community where needed."

Research shows that for every 10 days of bed rest in hospital, the equivalent of 10 years of muscle ageing occurs, in people over 80 years old. It takes longer to regain their muscle strength than it does to lose it. Therefore it is important to make sure there are no delays in getting frail patients safely home once they are ready to be discharged and that's where the new team can help from the moment they first arrive in A&E.

The frailty team are working really closely with occupational therapists, physiotherapists and other colleagues from Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust (LCHS) who are based in the community.