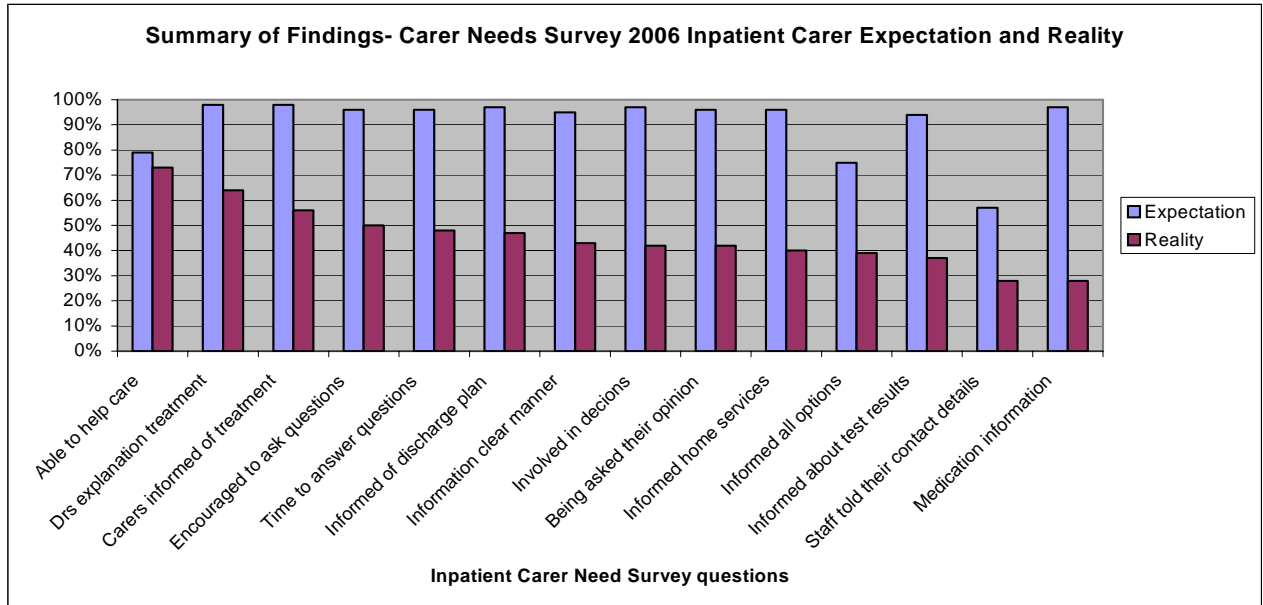


Entry Title
<p>Enhancing Carer Friendly Health Practices: Health staff working as a team to better support carers</p>
Abstract
<p>In order to improve the way acute health staff identify, support, inform, communicate with and involve carers, enhancing carer friendly health practices was initiated. Support from key stakeholders was sought and the core principles of clinical practice improvement methodology applied.</p> <p>Effective carer support is the responsibility of all members of the health care team. Analysis of feedback obtained from carers accessing Nepean Hospital concluded that carers have very high expectations about how they will be supported, communicated with and involved in acute care processes. On average less than 50% of these expectations were met during an episode of care. It was also identified that carers are not routinely identified on admission and that health staff had a poor knowledge of the services and supports available to support carers.</p> <p>Post implementation of innovative strategic interventions has seen a significant increase in the number of carers being formally identified on admission.</p>
Aim
<p>Enhancing carer friendly health practices (ECFHP) by improving staff skills in the acute setting to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify ▪ Support ▪ Inform ▪ Involve and ▪ Communicate with carers at Nepean Hospital.
Nature of the Problem
<p>Carers provide invaluable assistance to the people they care for and save the community in excess of \$2.6 billion a year. NSW Health identified that more support and greater access and information about services both internal and external to health should be provided to carers. Funds were allocated through NSW Health to SWAHS to establish the SWAHS Carers Program.</p> <p>To align with the objectives of NSW Health, at a local level an initial needs analysis and staff consultations undertaken by the Carer Program highlighted the lack of carer inclusion in current work practice at Nepean hospital.</p>
Extent of the problem
<p>To gauge the extent of the problem 3 baseline measures were undertaken.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carer Need survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carer Program staff were responsible for identifying and distributing the survey. ▪ 337 surveys distributed, 121 returned.

- 36% response rate
- On average carer expectations are not being met.



2. Patient Assessment on Admission form audit

Carer Program staff attended an audit of approx 451 medical records. Results indicated that:

- Poor compliance with completion
- Carers remain largely unidentified
- Carer issues not captured on admission
- This results negatively upon timely & effective discharge planning.

3. Pre carer awareness training program staff questionnaire was designed to ascertain current work practice. On examination of the results some of the main themes included:

- Staff don't seek carers out to provide them with information
- Carers can remain unidentified unless they identify themselves
- A perception that carer support is the responsibility of social work and discharge planners rather than other members of the health care team.

The following cause and effect diagram demonstrates the extent of the problem.

Planning and implementing solutions

ECFHP has a quality improvement focus. Baseline measures collected would be used to inform staff and to identify priority areas for improvement.

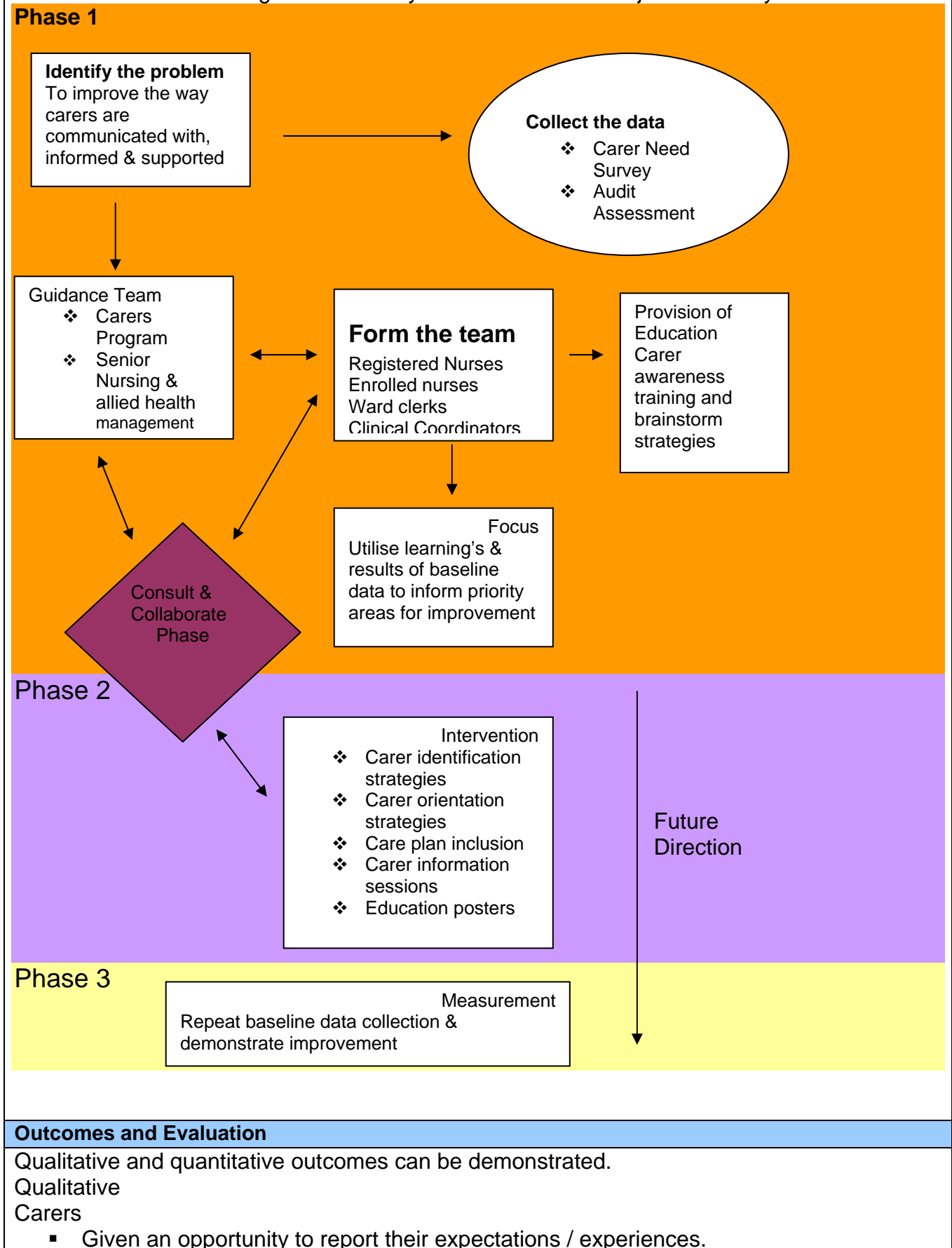
Support for the ECFHP project was obtained from the Chief Executive, Director of Nursing and Midwifery, Department Managers and Nursing Unit Managers (NUM's) at Nepean Hospital. Staff from individual wards and departments, in consultation with managers, were selected to attend a Carer Awareness Training program. An important consideration in undertaking the training was that it would be off campus and free. Participating staff were identified to act as potential 'change agents'. In agreeing to participate in the training program managers and staff made a commitment to being involved in the ECFHP project.

Having participated in the Carer Awareness Training program, staff would consult their managers and the Carers Program to implement specific strategies to enhance carer awareness and associated practices in ward / department areas. The impact of the implementation of specific interventions would be measured by repeating baseline measures 1&2. Strategies that have had a significant impact upon work practices will be shared with the training group and rolled out area wide.

The role of the Carer Program in the implementation process would be to: -

- Consult key stakeholders
- Engage staff
- Arrange training & guest speakers
- Facilitate training
- Negotiate strategies proposed
- Support implementation of strategies
 - Funding
 - Facilitating meetings
 - Negotiating with managers
- Publicise developments, improvements and progress of the project.
- Be responsive to the needs of staff
 - Organising a follow up feedback and planning session (also off campus)

Figure 3
Enhancing Carer Friendly Health Practices- Project Summary



Staff

- Feedback evaluations received report that staff are inspired & voice greater professional satisfaction in being able to provide holistic care to both patients and their carers.
- Feedback has expressed satisfaction of being involved in a 'big valuable' project & increasing awareness of carers needs as well as being part of 'creating change atmosphere'.
- There has been an opportunity for professional development to staff.

Carer Program

- The project has effectively increased the reach of the local Carer Program across the facility. Strategies implemented are having an impact upon local ward practice, policy and procedure. The needs of both carers as consumers of the health services and staff as the persons responsible for meeting those needs are now being considered.
- Health staff has been consulted as opposed to prescribed to.

External Service Providers

- Buy in from a local NGO to support the provision of in-services to frontline staff.
- Partnership resulting in two fold benefit
- Project staff can utilise the expertise of the NGO to provide education session about Carelink & the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre. The NGO has an opportunity to promote their service to frontline staff.
- Cost is maintained to be neutral
- Bridging the gap between community and acute health.

Quantitative

Implementation strategies	Amount / number
Number of staff involved in project @ Nepean	44
Carer Information Boards erected	11
No of carers identified & given a Care Information Kit Nov 06- June 07	202
No. of In-services given by project staff	29
Posters developed 'Equipment used in the Intensive Care Unit to care for your loved one'	1
Orientation manual drafted	1
Carer prompt added to clinical pathway	1
Carer details added to intake form	1

Sustaining change

The provision of timely support to carers has the potential to have a positive impact on avoidable hospital admissions and the overall health care experience of patients and their carers. A large team of health staff committed to enhancing the support provided to carers has been established. The implementation of strategies to support existing admission procedures has precipitated an increase in the numbers of carers identified and provided with a carer information kit. These procedures are now part of current work practice.

Future Scope

The model of carer support outlined in the ECFHP project is transferable to any other facility across NSW Health.

With multiple teams of health staff working on strategies across the many entry points to the hospital we are ensuring that individual needs are being addressed and more importantly that strategies trialed are tested, their effectiveness measured and their ability to be rolled out on a larger scale applied.