

Geriatric emergency management: An improved approach to care of high risk older adults in the emergency department

Laura Wilding and Ann Marie DiMillo
University of Ottawa, Canada

Older adults comprise the fastest growing demographic in Canada, and represent a large number of patient visits to the emergency department (ED). The complexity of these patients frequently results in the consumption of more ED resources, high rates of return ED visits, and more frequent admissions to hospital. However, despite the frequency of visits the unique needs of older adults may be difficult to realize within the fast-paced ED environment. Additionally, current system demands result in increased pressure to rapidly triage, assess and treat older patients. These factors, together with the existing knowledge gap regarding geriatric specific interventions, has led to an ED environment that is frequently unreceptive and poorly adapted to meet the needs of older adults. Ultimately this impacts the patient experience and ED use, and may contribute to decline and loss of independence.

The Geriatric Emergency Management (GEM) program was developed to optimize the treatment, safety and independence of identified high-risk seniors who are discharged home from the ED. GEM is an evidence-based, collaborative initiative between the ED and the Regional Geriatric Program of Eastern Ontario, and includes more than 20 community partners in the planning of care strategies and supports. This presentation will provide an overview of the innovative clinical, education, research & program strategies utilized to build capacity within the ED to achieve successful outcomes with this population. The success of this program has led to regional program expansion in order to promote an improved approach to the management of older adults in the ED.

Biography

Laura Wilding has been involved with Emergency and Trauma care since 1990. As the advanced practice nurse for the Geriatric Emergency Management (GEM) program, she has worked to develop, implement & evaluate this program within nine emergency departments across the Champlain Local Health Integration Network in Ontario. In addition, she is involved with program planning provincially, and has presented the Ottawa GEM model nationally and internationally. She leads many education, research and quality initiatives advocating for an improved approach to care of the high-risk elderly in the emergency department.

lwilding@toh.on.ca