

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, April 15 2015

GP takes lead on reducing COPD re-admissions

Hunter region GP Dr Fiona Van Leeuwen has developed a care model to identify and improve care for patients at high risk of preventable, recurrent hospital admissions as part of her study in the CEC's Clinical Leadership Program.

Dr Van Leeuwen is using nurse led clinics to manage high risk patients with a serious lung condition, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), to improve overall care and then reduce hospital readmissions.

CEC Clinical Leadership Program Director Dr Sarah Dalton said it was the first time a GP had taken part in the program, usually offered to hospital based clinicians, and it had proved enormously beneficial and opened new doors as the health system aimed to work together more effectively across the GP, primary care and hospitals sectors.

"The leadership program brings together emerging leaders in health who have a focus on patient safety and health system improvement. It provides the skills clinicians need to drive change," Dr Dalton said.

"The opportunity for us to work with GPs and move toward a more integrated model of care with hospitals and GPs in the same room is a real focus for everyone in health right now."

Dr Van Leeuwen presented her plan to the graduating class in March 2015. Her presentation demonstrated how, within current funding models, GPs could improve care and reduce hospital readmissions among COPD patients.

She is now exploring how the same principle could be expanded to reduce readmission of patients from other high risk groups including those with congestive cardiac failure, asthma and diabetes.

"I think the clinical leadership course is marvellous. It provides a lot of opportunities to get to know colleagues working in local health districts and to better understand the systems they work within," Dr Van Leeuwen said.

"There is no better way to improve health care than to pepper the health system with a general practice perspective. Only then can we truly work together to support patient journeys and focus on a system that works better and more efficiently."

Dr Van Leeuwen was supported in her study by the Hunter New England Local Health District and Hunter Medicare Local.

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