

Appendix C – Frailty Unit information

Frailty is a clinically recognised state of increased vulnerability that results from aging, associated with a decrease in the physical and psychological reserves (BGS definition). It is associated with increased morbidity, mortality, hospital admissions, and (once admitted) length of stay. Frail patients often have complex needs, which require complex answers. About 10% of people over 65 years old live with frailty, and between a quarter and a half of those aged over 85 years.

Frail and elderly patients need a holistic, person centred approach, with input from multiple disciplines. This is termed a “Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment” (CGA). This assessment looks at the person as a whole, and focuses on the “5 Ms”: mobility, mind (cognition and mood), multi-morbidity (multiple different disease processes or long term conditions), medications, and matters most (what is most important to the person for a good quality of life).

The frailty unit at Watford General Hospital aims to provide this multi-disciplinary assessment, avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, and keep people as independent as possible for as long as possible. We have close links with community teams, and can organise further assessments if required in the community. For the patients that do require admission, an early CGA has been shown to decrease deconditioning and length of stay.

We see people referred from A&E, and hope to increase our scope of referrals to GPs and community therapy and nursing teams. Our team complete CGAs in our unit located in Ambulatory Care, and as an “outreach” team assessing in A&E if our spaces are already full. Our team consists of a Consultant Geriatrician, junior doctors, specialist nurses, and specialist senior therapists (Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists). If appropriate, we can also refer for dietetic advice, speech and language therapy assessments, and social worker assessment.

An audit completed in October 2017 showed that we increased the percentage of patients discharged on the day of A&E attendance from 23% to 60% by completing a timely CGA.