Older Adult Psychiatric Liaison Service

Information about Delirium for patients and carers
**What is Delirium?**
Delirium is a state of confusion that has occurred due to a reaction within the body. This may be from an infection, medication including anesthesia, trauma, alcohol or the use of illicit substances.

Sometimes it may be caused by a chronic medical condition or a deficiency which can be corrected with medication. Those over the age of 65 years are more prone to developing this condition.

The onset of symptoms is often sudden and can last for days or weeks, but will dissipate eventually.

**Symptoms may include:**
- Confusion and disorientation
- Anxiety
- Agitation and aggression
- Visual and auditory hallucinations
- Delusional thinking
- Paranoia
- Poor concentration
- Altered sleep cycle.

**What happens after diagnosis?**
The medical team will look for the cause, this may involve them taking some diagnostic tests such as bloods, urine samples, x-rays and some scans. You may also be physically examined and a history of your recent physical health history may also be taken.

Treatment will be determined by the underlying cause, once established, but other medication may be given to ease some of the symptoms. This will be discussed with you or your relatives and you will be given information related to this.

The Older Adult Psychiatric Liaison Team may become involved in your care. We will offer support and guidance to your medical team as needed and talk to you and your family about what we will be advising and we will continue to see you until your Delirium resolves.
Advice for Relatives and Carers

It can be upsetting to see your relatives in a confused state, they may say or do things which are very out of character.

• Try to stay calm.
• Do not disagree with them or argue, this may cause them to become more distressed.
• Try to orientate your relative to the true time of day. It may be an idea to bring them in a clock.
• Ensure they have their hearing aids or glasses—to minimize confusion.
• Bring in photos or items from home that may provide comfort.
• Music may help in providing relaxation.
• Encourage them to eat and drink.
• Encourage them to comply with the treatment offered by the medical team.

After the Delirium has resolved

You may be prone to developing Delirium again. Your GP or healthcare provider will be made aware of what signs to look for so they can commence treatment as soon as possible, if the Delirium does return.