

The Out of Hospital Emergency Multidisciplinary Unit

Meeting the healthcare demands of our population both now and in the future will need a new approach to crisis presentation. The Future Hospital Commission report, the NHS Five Year Forward View and the Primary Care Workforce Commission, all call for greater integration between primary and secondary care and an 'ambulatory by default' approach in acute medicine.

The Emergency Multidisciplinary unit in Oxfordshire delivers comprehensive assessment and treatment of acute medical illness in a community setting for older patients living with frailty (cognitive, social and physical). It provides acute ambulatory care where appropriate to patients who would otherwise be referred to an acute hospital site and therefore delivers care in a setting closer to their home or care home.

Patients can be referred from their general practitioner/family physician or from paramedics from the ambulance service for an escalation of care.

Rapid assessment from multiple healthcare disciplines (nursing, medicine, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social care) provides comprehensive care delivery to address the multiple dimensions of need in this complex patient group. Clinical decision making is underpinned in this 'out of hospital' setting with point of care (POC) diagnostic testing. A range of biochemical tests with results available within minutes can detect acute kidney injury, electrolyte disturbance, acid-base disorders, coagulopathy, myocardial damage, infection and anaemia.

The central hospital laboratory service provides quality assurance and stock control to ensure seamless delivery of POC testing and additional connectivity transmits all POC results back to the laboratory database. As a result there is a continuous electronic record of all blood results for patients in the population wherever they seek healthcare, which allows for comparison of results at any subsequent healthcare attendance to determine stability, deterioration or recovery.

A full range of parenteral medical treatments can be given, guided by POC tests and where necessary cross-sectional imaging arranged at the local acute trust. Over 60% of patients (with a median age of 80) are managed on a purely ambulatory path without needing a hospital bed at any point during the month after initial assessment on EMU. The EMU won the inaugural Guardian Healthcare Innovation Award for Service Delivery in 2013.



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