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## Top 5 Program

An innovative program that helps personalise hospital care for patients with memory and thinking problems is being officially launched at Fairfield Hospital during Seniors Week (15 - 23 March 2014).

Top 5 is a program that enables staff to work with carers to tap into the knowledge and expertise they have of the person they care for. Carers work with staff to plan together the Top 5 ways to settle, calm, and care for their loved ones.

Rozina Shekhar Dementia/Delirium CNC said the knowledge gained, especially in relation to communication and behaviour, can be the key to assisting staff to manage the care of each particular patient.

“Top 5 is based on early contact with carers to obtain information regarding the patient and their care needs,” Ms Shekhar said.

“From this, 5 strategies are formulated and documented, to be used by all staff caring for the patient. Helpful information may include what their usual routine is, particular preferences or what helps to settle them when they become agitated. Understanding the behaviour is key to being able to manage it.

“Top 5 not only promotes individualised patient-centred care, but also recognises the valuable information that carers have, regarding the person they care for.

“The program has been implemented at Liverpool hospital with positive results. Staff have found that patients with cognitive impairment have quicker recovery, less agitation, frustration and distress, more effective communication and an increased ability to relate,” she said.

Ms Shekhar said carers also benefit from the program as it increases their confidence in the healthcare being provided to their family member, and they have the knowledge that their family member is more settled and comfortable when their carer is not at their bedside.

Ms Pauline Vueti, Ages Services Emergency Team Clinical Nurse Consultant, said the launch of the program at Fairfield Hospital highlights the hard work and knowledge that carers provide.

“The important role carers play is often overlooked,” Ms Vueti said.

“Carers are essential partners in the care hospitals provide to patients and the community.

“They may care for a few hours a week or all day every day but the work carers perform is vital and it is important we provide them with support,” she said.

Up to 2.7 million unpaid family carers in Australia provide help and support for relatives or friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition or frail aged.