

24/10/2023

To Practice Manager and General Practitioners

**Re: commencement of Older Adults Community Mental Health Team
Mercy Mental Health and Wellbeing Service**

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health, has recommended the development of an integrated mental health and wellbeing system, that provides a range of local and community-based services across the lifespan. In keeping with the recommendations, from 1st November 2023, Mercy Health will provide Older Adults Mental Health and Wellbeing services within the Local Government Areas of Hobsons Bay and Wyndham. This new service will support persons over the age of 65 living at home or in residential aged care, who experience mental illness or who develop mental illness later in life, and have complex physical health comorbidities.

The Older Adults Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Service is a multidisciplinary team that provides a range of specialist outreach psychiatric interventions for older adults and their carers/support person(s). The team operates Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am to 4:30 pm. Services offered include: mental health assessment, diagnostic clarification, treatment recommendations, support and education, secondary consultation for GPs and residential aged care staff. The team liaises with other health professionals to ensure everyone involved in caring for an individual is aware of any mental health treatment plan. In addition, with consent, the team may support with linkages or referrals to other or more appropriate service providers.

Inclusion criteria for Older Adults Community Team

- Persons aged over 65, or over 50 years from indigenous communities, who appear to be experiencing mental illness or relapse of existing mental health diagnosis e.g., bipolar, depression, schizophrenia or psychiatric complications of dementia (but not limited to these)
- Persons aged over 65, or over 50 years from indigenous communities, with complex physical health concerns/frailty that is or has the potential to exacerbate a mental health condition
- Persons 65+ or over 50 years from indigenous communities, living in the Hobsons Bay and Wyndham LGAs
- Lack of readily available community support and/or social isolation

- The older person and/or their next of kin, carer or guardian have consented to the referral

Exclusion criteria for Older Adults Community Team

- Persons aged 65 or over without comorbidity or frailty whose current mental health needs are adequately met and are supported by other adult mental health teams within the community
- Older persons whose physical health care is the main focus of care and/or have unstable medical conditions
- Persons without a primary mental health diagnosis or concern
- Persons presenting with delirium which has the potential to become a medical emergency. Therefore, the primary focus of care is to treat the underlying cause.
- Older persons presenting with primary alcohol and other drug (AOD) concerns that are better met by a specialist AOD provider
- Older person living outside of the Hobsons Bay and Wyndham catchments
- Severe behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD), or persons who would benefit from support from the Severe Behaviour Response Team (SBRT) as Dementia Support Australia (1800 699 799) is funded to provide these services until June 2025 and are also the referral pathway for access to the Specialist Dementia Care Program (SDCP)

Mercy Mental Health and Wellbeing Services **do not** currently manage inpatient beds for older persons. Beds may be accessed through The Sunshine Aged Persons Mental Health Unit based at Sunshine Hospital upon liaison with Western Health. For out of hours crisis support please contact Mercy Mental Health Triage on 1300 657 259 which operates 24/7 and provides telephone screening, triage and review of current mental health status. Triage aims to obtain information to determine the need for service and the urgency of care required. **In the case of an acute crisis or if you believe you or someone you care for is in imminent danger, please contact emergency services on 000.**

Referrals to the Older Adults Community Team **must be made via Mercy Mental Health Triage on 1300 657 259**. Any referrals sent directly to the team will be redirected back to Triage resulting in a delayed response.

It is not unusual for older adults to experience a number of co-morbid medical conditions that may imitate or exacerbate existing psychiatric symptoms. Any acute behavioural changes may indicate delirium which requires medical treatment rather than psychiatric care.

Therefore, it is necessary to request the following information to aid the triage process and ensure the most appropriate response or service is provided:

Referral Letter from GP

- Reason for referral, timeframe of onset of symptoms, MSE and any risk issues
- Details of any treatments trialled to date
- Medical history and details of any other specialists involved in care
- Current medications (dose/frequency) and any known allergies
- Have other services been explored or referred to? e.g., Dementia Support Australia Dementia Behaviours Management Advisory Services (DBMAS) & Severe Behaviour Response Teams (SBRT), Western Health Cognitive Dementia and Memory Service (CDAMS)
- Who has consented to this referral? Consumer/and or support person? (The Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 has provision for compulsory assessment of a person to prevent serious deterioration in their mental or physical health or serious harm to another person)
- NOK/support person contact name and telephone number

Pathology -within the last 4 weeks

- FBE including U & E, ESR, CRP, TFT, LFT, B12, Folate, blood glucose
- MSU within 3-4 days
- Radiology – CT brain & chest Xray if available

We look forward to working with you and getting to know you, and we hope that your experience with our service is a positive one.

Sincerely



Teresa Kudinoff
Divisional Director Adult and Older Adult Community Mental Health Services