

## Helping patients with chronic disease



The biggest health problem facing Australians is chronic disease. It describes many different conditions – such as asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular or renal disease and arthritis.

In recent years, the prevalence of chronic disease has increased and it is the leading cause of death and disability in Australia. There are a range of causes such as the ageing of our population and lifestyle factors such as smoking, physical inactivity and excessive consumption of alcohol.

At Cabrini Health, 12 per cent of inpatient hospital stays (more than one day) are due to a primary admission diagnosis of a chronic respiratory or cardiac nature.

One approach to the problem, which has been used widely both internationally and across Australia, is to invest in helping patients to manage their own health - for example, skills to maintain good health and cope with the challenges of living and caring for chronic conditions.

Lauren Barker, Manager Chronic Disease and Complex Aged Service, says that while this may sound like an obvious and simple solution, it is not widely practised in the private healthcare sector. Cabrini Health will be one of the first private healthcare services to venture into this area.

During the next 12 months, Cabrini Health will be building upon the current Cardiac Rehabilitation, Case Management, Continence and Diabetes Education departments to develop a comprehensive Chronic Disease and Complex Aged Service which will better support the management of our clients living with Chronic and/or complex conditions. Lauren says the Chronic Disease and Complex Aged Service aims to assist people living with chronic conditions to optimise their health and quality of life.

“With the belief that patients have a central role in managing their health, we will work with the individual and their family/carers to identify real and potential risks, to support them in health behaviour change and to empower them with the knowledge, tools and skills to be a partner in managing their chronic condition,” she said.

“We will support patients to work in partnership with their GP, specialists and other healthcare providers to better manage their chronic condition and to keep them living safely at home for longer.”

As set out in the Cabrini Health Strategic Plan 2010-12:

*The wellbeing and happiness of our patients and families is central to what we do. By 2020, we will enhance health and quality of life by treating sickness and by working with our patients their families to anticipate, prevent and ease suffering.*

The Cabrini Health Chronic Disease and Complex Aged Service has an integral role in fulfilling this aspect of our vision.