Pathways to better health: bridging the health and social care divide

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10 facts on ageing and the life course

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The ageing of the world's population - in developing and developed countries - is an indicator of improving global health. The world's population of people 60 years of age and older has doubled since 1980 and is forecast to reach 2 billion by 2050. This is a cause for celebration. Older people make important contributions to society as family members, volunteers and as active participants in the workforce. The wisdom they have gained through life experience makes them a vital social resource.

However, along with these benefits come special health challenges for the 21st century. It is important to prepare health providers and societies to meet the specific needs of older populations. This includes training for health professionals on old-age care; preventing and managing age-associated chronic diseases; designing sustainable policies on long-term and palliative care; and developing age-friendly services and settings.

The quicker we take action, the better chance we have of ensuring this global transformation benefits everyone. Countries that invest in healthy ageing can expect a significant social and economic return for the whole community.
The Broken Delivery System

- The current system in many countries gives too little attention to prevention
- Primary health care is often the poor relation and is of variable quality
- Care is fragmented rather than integrated
- The needs of people with chronic diseases are not well met
- The importance of multimorbidity is only now being recognised – for all age groups
Perspective

The ten characteristics of the high-performing chronic care system

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to describe the characteristics of the high-performing chronic care system and the four implementation strategies needed to achieve such a system. The paper starts with a description of the Chronic Care Model and summarises evidence on its impact. This is followed by a review of international evidence on gaps in the quality of chronic care. These gaps suggest that, useful and influential as the Chronic Care Model is, more is needed to help health care decision makers bring about the reorientation required to meet the needs of populations in which chronic diseases predominate. The second half of the paper therefore sets out the ten characteristics and four implementation strategies required to achieve a high-performing chronic care system. In doing so, it provides practical guidance to policy makers and health care leaders on the most promising strategies for improving the provision of chronic care, drawing on evidence from the experience of England, New Zealand and USA.

Introduction

In the USA and Europe, between 70% and 86% of deaths have been attributed to chronic diseases (World Health Organisation Europe, 2006; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007). These diseases have a major impact on disability and quality of life as well as being the main cause of premature mortality. They also account for a high proportion of health care costs. Chronic diseases are likely to increase in absolute and relative importance as further progress is made in reducing the burden from communicable diseases in low and middle income countries and as obesity and other risk factors impact on population health throughout the world (WHO, 2005).

Health care systems are beginning to rise to this challenge by placing higher priority on the prevention of disease and by considering how to reorient the...
Introducing Mrs Smith.....
How has Torbay done it?

› Health and social care teams that serve localities of 25-40,000
› Teams are aligned with GP practices in these localities and support GPs care for Mrs Smith
› Care coordinators were an important innovation
› A single budget is used flexibly with NHS funds being used to increase social care support to help people remain at home
› A long term commitment to integration of care driven by a focus on the needs of Mrs Smith
Critical challenges for the future

› How to fund care through public and private sources?
› How to promote health throughout the life course?
› How to move from fragmentation to integration?
› How to harness innovations in technology?
In summary

- The current system is broken and needs fundamental reform
- The desirable characteristics of the future system are well understood
- The platform is burning and action is urgently required
- The need for visionary leadership has never been greater
Next steps

- A simple, compelling and positive vision of the future system should be developed
- The vision should be centred on ‘Mrs Smith’ and what it means for her
- The vision should also focus on the benefits for the whole population
- Wellbeing and healthy ageing must be at the heart of the vision