Dementia Advice

The Goal
The dementia advice service provided through Health Link responds to the immediate needs of individuals and caregivers living with dementia. The service will provide convenient access to health-related advice on issues that occur during the course of dementia. Dementia advice will support the enhancement of services as part of the pending Alberta Dementia Strategy and Action Plan. This new clinical service provided through Health Link will complement existing services such as the Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories' (ASANT) First Link service for proactive referral to ASANT's psychosocial information, education and support services. Dementia advice is expected to be fully operational across Alberta by spring 2016.

The Process
Dementia nurses will receive referrals from Health Link staff that have identified caregivers and/ or patients requiring additional support and dementia care expertise. Using decision support tools and service navigation resources, the dementia nurse will assess, triage and make recommendations to caregivers on when and where to seek additional health/medical services. The nurse will liaise with experts including specialist physicians and geriatric psychiatrists, and other local health and community resources. The nurse will also provide supportive listening and short term psychosocial support for caregivers. In a later phase of the project, dementia nurses will be able to provide consultation and advice to health care partners.

The Outcome
It is anticipated that dementia advice service will positively impact several outcomes, including:

- Increased access to appropriate information and supports for people living with dementia and their family caregivers;
- Reduced family caregiver distress;
- Increased use of Health Link by seniors and their family caregivers; and
- Decreased unnecessary emergency department visits related to dementia.

The Team
This project is a collaboration between Health Link and the Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network (SCN).

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