

Geriatric emergency medicine fellowship improves care for older adults

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Dear Editor,

More older people in Ireland than ever before are attending our emergency departments and are associated with admission rates of over 50%¹. Geriatric emergency medicine (GEM) has been established globally as a specialty with its own post graduate trained specialists in recognition of the pressing need to address how older people are cared for over the first 24 hours of an emergency admission.

In 2022, Tallaght University Hospital secured a National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP) funded Aspire post-CSCST Fellowship in GEM. The fellowship in Tallaght endeavoured to address the local health challenges. The Hospital has seen a 22% increase in older persons attending at the Emergency Department in the last five years, a pattern that is set to continue over the next 15 years as the local population aged over 75 increases by 123%, or 11,500 people¹.

Older patients are generally more complex than younger patients, with physiologic, pharmacologic, and pathologic differences, as well as social needs that may differ from younger patients. In addition, there are specific geriatric syndromes such as silver trauma and delirium that often go unrecognized in emergency departments. The clinical focus of the GEM fellowship was to build expertise in Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment and early identification of frailty syndromes in the older cohort presenting to the emergency department.

The GEM fellow was supported with a structured educational experience, a personal supervisor, opportunities for audit and research. The fellowship was underpinned by the European Curriculum of Geriatric Emergency Medicine.² Within the emergency department, the Geriatric Emergency Medicine Fellow focussed on the assessment of patients aged over 65 year old alongside the multi-disciplinary Geriatric Emergency Department Intervention (GEDI) teams.

The educational component of the fellowship was structured into four three-month terms with secondments in the following areas: age related health care, palliative care and psychiatry of old age, stroke and memory. The fellow was supported in each specialist area by a specialist consultant mentor and multidisciplinary teams. The fellowship also focussed on care in the community spending time with the National Ambulance Service's Pathfinder service, Tallaght University Hospital's Integrated Care Programme for Older Persons (ICPOP) team and domicillary visits with the Psychiatry of Later Life and Palliative Care teams.

The introduction of a post CSCST GEM fellowships in our department has supported a range of concurrent initiatives to meet the complex care requirements for the increasing number of older

patients. The number of post-CSCST GEM fellowships in Ireland are expanding and we believe that we have demonstrated that the fellowship is of similar standard of similar fellowships offered in North America³ and the UK.

Declarations of Conflicts of Interest:

None declared.

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