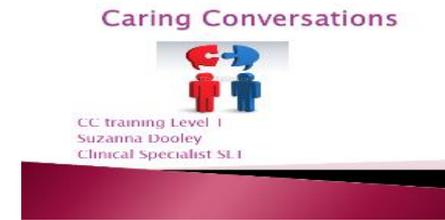


***Caring Conversations in Dementia Care  
Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) Department,  
St. Columcille's Hospital (SCH), Loughlinstown***



Caring Conversations in Dementia Care is an education and training program for acute care staff across all hospital disciplines and departments. It is designed to improve staff knowledge on the impact of dementia on communication, provide communication support training and enhance interactive opportunities. This initiative was developed and will be coordinated by Suzanna Dooley, Clinical Specialist SLT in dementia care. It has been funded by an acute hospital grant from the National Dementia Office and has full backing from the SCH management team.

This program addresses an identified need for increased communication access and support for people with dementia and the staff caring for them in acute hospitals. *The Caring Conversations Program* will expand the focus of our dementia friendly hospital which already boasts a Dementia Garden, Memory Technology Resource Suite, Conversation Coaching Intervention in the Out-Patient Service and an Alzheimer's Café. It fits well within an integrated healthcare approach and care pathway for dementia.

- The program is a two-tiered communication training program; Level 1: General Support and Administration staff (Security, Household/Catering / Medical Secretaries etc) and Level 2: Healthcare Professionals (Nursing Medical and HSCPs). The goal is to provide education and training for all hospital staff over a 9-month period. A mixed methods approach will be used to measure impact and inform sustainability. This training can be facilitated and is transferable to other acute settings nationally.
- In addition to the training aspect of this initiative, communication screening for all patients admitted to SCH with dementia will be carried out by SLTs to raise general awareness and to manage communication disabilities associated with dementia. Caring Conversations Program can facilitate a cultural shift amongst staff in terms of their role in interacting with patients with dementia by challenging and enabling them to change their behaviour, attitudes and skills to support communication and engage more easily.
- We look forward to commencing the Caring Conversations initiative later in the year, working safely in the context of COVID- 19.

***SLT Dept., SCH, 2020***