What is a Case Conference?

By Jessica Ferguson, 2012

Many Residential Aged Care Facilities undertake case conferences regarding their residents as a way of developing a suitable care plan that is relevant to the needs and goals of the resident. As a family member or loved one of an older person within an Aged Care Facility you are entitled to attend the case conference to discuss any issues and to help develop a plan of care (Melbourne General Practice Network Inc., 2012).

What Will We Talk About at the Case Conference and How Long Will it Take?

A case conference should take between 15 and 30 minutes, however it can sometimes take longer than this depending on what the staff, your loved one or yourself have to discuss (Monash Division, 2012).

Every Aged Care Facility will conduct their case conferencing differently, however I have found the following common things discussed at most of the Facilities in which I have worked:

- The Residents health history and identified needs (e.g. nutrition, toileting, falls, behaviour, mobility).
- Outcomes and goals that staff, resident and family/friend wish to achieve.
- Any issues or concerns.
- Medications that the resident is taking.

Who Will Be at the Case Conference?

This will also differ between facilities. The case conference will usually be held by a member of management (e.g. DON, Care Manager, Care Coordinator) and/or a Registered or Enrolled Nurse. It may also involve:

- Care staff
- General Practitioner
- Diversional Therapists
- Physiotherapy Aids
- Physiotherapists
- Other members of the Allied Health team (e.g. Podiatrist, Occupational Therapist, Pharmacist, etc.)
If there is a certain member of the care team that you would like to attend the conference, make sure to contact the facility prior to the case conference and discuss your wishes with them.

**What are the Benefits of a Case Conference?**

The Western Melbourne Division of General Practice identified many benefits of case conferences, including:

- Improved care for the Resident that is focused on their wishes and needs.
- Better compliance with care as the Resident gains a better understanding of their care.
- Increased team effort within the Facility with a higher standard of care.
- Family and/or friends gain a greater understanding of their loved ones needs.
- Relatives can feel more involved in their loved ones care.
- Better relationship between relatives and staff.
- Staff can use the information to input into the Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI).
- Staff can gain a better understanding of the Residents care plan.

**How Do I Become Involved in a Case Conference?**

As the next of kin you should be invited to participate in the case conference by a member of the facility. If you have never been extended an invitation to a case conference you may wish to discuss this with management to find out what their policy on case conferencing is. Make it clear that you are keen to participate as, despite being a time consuming activity for staff within the facility, Residential Aged Care Facilities that do utilise case conferencing report it to be a very worthwhile activity (Melbourne General Practice Network Inc., 2012).

If you do not live locally, perhaps you could suggest having the case conference via phone.

Ensure that you make a list of goals and any concerns that you may have prior to the case conference as you are likely to forget if you do not have this documented. If you are having difficulty thinking of goals ask staff at the facility if they have a set agenda for case conferences. The agenda may help you to identify some areas that are of concern, or could be improved upon. Also, prior to the case conference make some time to talk to your loved one about what their main goals and/or concerns are.

If you do not have time to attend a case conference due to other commitments you can send in a list of goals and/or concerns prior to the conference with a letter of apology. You can also request to be forwarded a written summary of the case conference (Western Melbourne Division of General Practice, 2008).

**References:**


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