



Perley Rideau

The Perley and Rideau
Veterans' Health Centre

Study Documents Benefits of SAFE Unit

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A peer-reviewed study published in the Journal of the American Medical Directors Association (JAMDA) documents the benefits of an innovative pilot project underway at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre. The study evaluates the performance of SAFE – Sub-Acute Care for Frail Elderly – a 20-bed unit established in partnership with The Ottawa Hospital in 2018.

SAFE provides a new level of care to frail seniors recovering from surgery or short-term illnesses. Eligible patients are transferred from local acute-care hospitals to the SAFE unit, where they can access the medical and restorative care needed to recover and return home. In addition, SAFE patients undergo cognitive screening and an overall frailty assessment to identify any other issues, such as undiagnosed dementia.

The study compared two groups of older adults admitted to acute-care hospitals in Ottawa: the 153 patients who transferred to SAFE during its first year of operation and a control group of approximately 1,700 similar patients who remained in hospital. A significant difference between the two groups is that the SAFE patients had more complex disease profiles – more of them suffered from ailments such as coronary heart disease or cancer, for instance. Despite this difference, though, SAFE patients spent less time in hospital, were more likely to return home, and were less likely to require home care or be transferred to long-term care. They were also no more likely to visit a hospital emergency room during the first month after discharge.

“Ultimately, everyone wants patients to get well enough to return home as soon as possible, and that’s exactly what SAFE helps to achieve,” says Dr. Benoît Robert, Perley Rideau’s Medical Director. “It’s clearly good for patients and for the healthcare system.”

The study was led by the Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care, in partnership with Bruyère Research Institute and ICES (formerly known as the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences).

Quotes

“The study demonstrates that transitional care focussed on rehabilitation and restoration improves outcomes and quality of life, and reduces costs to the healthcare system. With the number of Canadians aged 85 and older expected to triple over the next few decades, we need better models of care. The evaluation of the SAFE unit offers valuable lessons to inform the development of future models of care.”

Dr. Amy Hsu, Ph. D.

Program Evaluation Specialist,
The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre



Quick facts

- **Read the Journal Article:** A Case-Control Study of the Sub-Acute Care for Frail Elderly (SAFE) Unit on Hospital Readmission, Emergency Department Visits and Continuity of Post-Discharge Care: [https://www.jamda.com/article/S1525-8610\(20\)30631-9/fulltext](https://www.jamda.com/article/S1525-8610(20)30631-9/fulltext)
- The Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care (CoE), established at the Perley Rideau in 2019, conducts applied research, and identifies, develops and shares best practices in the care of older adults living with frailty. The CoE has begun a follow-up project to further evaluate particular aspects of SAFE, such as cost savings and reduced requirements for follow-up care.
- Established in 2002, The Bruyère Research Institute is a partnership between Bruyère, a multi-site academic healthcare organization, and the University of Ottawa. The Institute supports research that contributes to a better, more responsive healthcare system that delivers the best care to patients, residents and families.
- ICES is an independent, non-profit research institute that uses population-based health information to produce knowledge about a broad range of healthcare issues. ICES research on the performance of healthcare systems and the evolving care needs of Ontarians often informs the policies and priorities of governments, hospitals, planners and practitioners.
- At The Ottawa Hospital (TOH), excellent care is inspired by research and driven by compassion. Affiliated with the University of Ottawa, TOH attracts some of the most influential scientific minds from around the world. A focus on learning and research leads to new techniques and discoveries that are adopted globally to improve patient care.

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