

Measuring and optimising the efficiency of community hospital inpatient care for older people: the MoCHA mixed-methods study

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Plain English summary

The MoCHA mixed methods study

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Plain English summary

Community hospitals are small hospitals providing locally based inpatient and outpatient services (≈400 in the UK). Inpatient care for older people recovering from illness is the most common service provided. Research has shown that older people treated in community hospital wards do better than people with similar rehabilitation needs treated in general hospitals. However, national surveys have shown variation between community hospitals in areas such as staffing, leadership, length of stay, patient improvement and costs. It is not known why such differences occur or how they affect care quality and costs. We organised a series of studies to explore these issues.

We used national figures to work out the performance of 101 community hospital wards. We were able to describe the key characteristics of such wards that led to efficient care for patients and for the tax payer. The findings indicate that there is potential for average cost savings of 17% (or £47M per year) for this group of 101 community hospital wards. We also spent time in three community hospitals to understand how they provided care for patients, and identified features of rehabilitation good practice that included staff from different disciplines working better together, improved shared decision-making with patients and families and a better understanding of recovery timelines.

Based on these studies, we developed an internet-based calculator that will allow NHS ward staff and managers to understand the performance of their own community hospital, and to see how it is performing compared with the 101 community hospitals we studied. This calculator is available at <http://mocha.nhsbenchmarking.nhs.uk/> (accessed 9 September 2019). The calculator will assist staff in considering what steps they could take to improve performance.

Potential benefits of this study are improving the performance of community hospital wards and the quality of rehabilitation provided to older people on these wards.

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