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Introduction: Unplanned emergency admissions are an increasing challenge for most acute hospitals. A number of emergency response services have been developed in differing areas, variably reporting positive impacts in patient care and hospital avoidance. Here we report a rapid response service run via Croydon University Hospital NHS Trust in conjunction with community and GP services. The service comprises of nursing, therapy and administrative staff led by a community geriatrician. The service currently accepts patients from the local hospital, GPs, London ambulance service and local rapid access geriatric services. The service operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Methods: Data were collected contemporaneously, as part of the referral process to the Rapid Response Team. Data collected included referral source, reason for referral and outcome of the review. Information from December 2014 to March 2015 was reviewed.

Results: Over a four month period, the rapid response team saw 543 patients. 95% of these were seen within 2 hours, on average being seen within 1 hour of referral. Of these patients, 84 (15%) were referred on to the local emergency hospital. 18 patients (3%) were referred to a step-up intermediate care bed. The remaining patients were managed at home with support from the rapid response team and other community services.

Conclusions: This rapid response service provides a proactive assessment method for people in the community reaching a point in their medical or social care which would normally lead to a crisis admission to the local acute hospital. The service is extremely responsive, being able to see most patients within two hours. Further work is required to compare the acuity of patients managed in the community by the Rapid Response Team to those admitted to the acute hospital.