



Communication Training within the NHS

We had the opportunity to deliver 'Challenges' Communication Training to Specialist Palliative Care Teams in North Wales.

Background

The Challenges In Palliative Care Educational Rolling Programme is an annual event. It is aimed at the specialist palliative care community and endeavours to respond to learning needs of this group of health care professionals. There are 3 topics covered over 3 days. The aim of which is to give as much opportunity as is possible for stretched teams to be able to access the sessions. This 2017/2018 Challenges comprised of 3 research into practice days, 3 ethics in practice days and 3 communication days. The palliative care community have over the years had a number of communication sessions, often around breaking bad news and generally following a particular theoretical approach. All have been delivered by people with expertise in communication in the palliative care arena. This time we felt that previous approaches had not always been as accessible with their emphasis on role play being one of the detractors and decided to go for a different approach.

Andy Cole was approached to deliver his programme and he very kindly agreed to take on this commitment. Over the 3 days 69 people attended. They were from a variety of professional back grounds – doctors, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and students. They were all from either Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board or the 4 non-statutory hospice services. The overall response from the event was excellent.

Intended outcome

In this instance the outcome we looked for was to send those attending away with the knowledge and confidence to cope with very difficult situations when dealing with terminally ill patients and their families. This is never going to be an easy part of anyone's job but it was our job to make those people feel more confident and knowledgeable and able to deliver a personal service that they felt was tailored to an individual.

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Feedback

Feedback sheets where quality and impact were assessed provided the following information.

Of the 69 the majority 86% classed the day as excellent with remainder 14% feeling that the day was good. 75% felt that the timing was about right and 78% were happy with the overall length of the sessions. 90% felt that the quality of the presentation was excellent with the remaining 10% finding the quality fair to good. Impact on practice and relevance to practice produced very encouraging results with 80% feeling that the day had been a very beneficial use of their time with 73% stating that the communication day would have positive impact on their practice.

Candidates were asked to comment on anything that they found especially useful, anything that they thought could have been done differently and whether there would be topics that they would like covered in the future. Below are a selection of the comments received;

- Best challenges day ever
- Best study day
- It's been brilliant
- Could do more of this – thank you
- I would love to listen to Andy Cole again as I feel I have learnt a lot of new skills
- Refreshing to have different approach to communication skills.
- Fantastic study day
- Brilliant facilitator, knowledgeable, learnt a lot about self and team – Self Care
- Nice that things were evidence based

The fact that 73% felt that they would change their practice for the better as a result of the day is quite astonishing and could have far reaching benefits for the dying patient and their families in North Wales.