

11 THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTEER RESEARCH ASSISTANT IN A HOSPICE SETTING

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Background A hospice setting has a small, busy research team and the volunteer research assistant is an important role within the team, providing additional support for delivery of research projects and related activities.

The role was first introduced in 2014 following the development of research infrastructure and capacity building within the organisation.

Aim and method To introduce volunteers to support hospice research including:

- Assisting with set up and co-ordination of studies. Including support with the organisation and collation of study materials, meetings and training to the site.
- Assisting the set up and running of research events by helping organise attendance lists and other materials. Greeting and registering attendees on arrival.
- Data entry and data checking.

Results Involved volunteers has provided the hospice with additional research capacity to deliver projects and other research related activities.

- Volunteers with different skills, expertise and experience of the organisation has enabled matching their input to the needs of the research activity.
- Experience of involving volunteers has enabled development of a role description for a 'volunteer research assistant'.
- Introducing the role of the 'volunteer research assistant' has helped to promote ownership of this unique position to those involved. There is value in developing this role to provide regular support in developing, setup, delivering and disseminating research within hospices.

Conclusions Involving volunteers as part of the research team has been a rewarding one working towards the hospice's strategy to become increasingly research active to provide the best care for patients and their families.