DEVELOPING A CARERS GROUP

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Introduction

It was identified that there was a need to support carers within a multidisciplinary environment. The group enabled carers to meet and share experiences.

It is important to care for the carers.

Aims

- To provide a structured programme for carers.
- To impart knowledge and information to carers on a variety of topics.
- To have a holistic approach to providing support for carers, and to incorporate all members of the palliative care team to contribute to the programme.

Methods

- Evaluated existing service for carers.
- Visited a carers group in another locality.
- Informally interviewed carers at Day Hospice re: need and content of the programme.
- Developed a 12 session programme over 6 weeks, meeting weekly at the Hospice.
- Pilot included Day Hospice patient carers, and then expanded to open referral system.
- Evaluated each session and then the entire programme.

Results

Feedback from evaluation shows carers felt supported, gained motivation and benefited from useful information.

From pilot session:
- 10 sessions scored 100% very satisfied
- 1 session scored 20% least useful, 20% most useful, 60% very satisfied.

From 2 sessions:
- 67% were women
- 33% were men.

Informal comments were positive. Several would like an avenue to continue to meet after the group has finished.

Discussion

- Results show that the need to support and provide information to carers was met.
- At the end of the programme carers reported they felt more supported and better informed.
- Established peer support continues with some carers.
- Feedback showed that it would be more beneficial to have longer sessions over an 8 week period.
- Referrals avenue to be extended to other teams and programme to be more widely publicised.

Conclusion

With user involvement we have developed a support service to carers with a focus and structure. This supports and enables carers to care for themselves while caring for others.