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DEVELOPING A CARERS GROUPDorothy Haskins, Becky Chaddock, Wendy Ashton *Eden Valley Hospice, Carlisle, Cumbria*

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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 palliative care team to contribute to the programme.

Methods

- ▶ Evaluated existing service for carers.
- ▶ Visited 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 benefitted 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 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.