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BREATHING SPACE: A FLEXIBLE GROUP PROGRAMME FOR PEOPLE WITH SHORTNESS OF BREATH

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Introduction

Breathlessness is a common symptom experienced by patients with advanced conditions which greatly impacts on wellbeing. The nature of patients' breathlessness often prevents them from being able to access support representing an unmet need for this population.

Breathing Space is a non-pharmacological support programme for breathless patients with an advanced medical condition.

The programme is a multi-disciplinary initiative with collaboration between the Hospice and local community services.

Aims To empower patients through:

- ▶ Understanding why they are breathless
- ▶ Awareness of practical strategies to self manage breathlessness
- ▶ Living life to the fullest alongside breathlessness
- ▶ Providing support for patients and carers not able to access existing services.

Methods A unique model was developed with a focus on maximising accessibility for the breathless patient. A series of stand alone modules encompass breathing control techniques, education and coping strategies to equip the patient with a set of skills to self manage their breathlessness even if they attend just once.

Breathing space

- ▶ 9 drop in modules (Booth et al, 2006)
- ▶ Carers welcome and encouraged to attend
- ▶ Transport and lunch provided free of charge
- ▶ Advocacy service available.

Results The results from the MYCaW outcome measure, attendance and user feedback will be collated and presented.

Discussion While managing breathlessness is well established in palliative care, there is limited evidence to support the effectiveness of these interventions. Breathing Space offers a refreshing approach to this challenging symptom within a flexible group framework. Robust evaluation will contribute to the evidence base for non-pharmacological interventions for palliative breathlessness.

Through collaboration between hospice and community professionals, Breathing Space allows for sharing of practice and expertise.

Conclusion Breathing Space supports patients with advanced breathlessness to improve their wellbeing.