

informative, supportive forum. The rolling programme of semi-structured sessions is intended to enhance awareness and choice by raising important issues early on in the 'journey'.

Aims The programme has three main aims: to provide information on key 'Quality of Life' issues for those coping with illness; to facilitate discussion and understanding between patients and carers around these key issues; and to provide support from professionals and other group members. These aims tie in well with NICE guidance for psychosocial support, and with the NCPC's initiative "Dying Matters".

Method The 6-week LIP is built around themes identified from previous groups at the Hospice (eg, Families and Feelings, Intimacy and Sexuality, Lifestyle and Coping, and Planning for Future Care). Each 90-min session is run by a relevant professional, with a co-ordinator/facilitator present throughout for continuity. The theme for each session is used as a starting-point for information and discussion. What follows is a more open, free-flowing group time, where issues important to the group members are shared and reflected upon. An anonymous feedback questionnaire is sent to participants after the programme's end.

Results and discussion Group numbers vary from 8 to 20+, with a good mixture of patients and carers. The weekly themes certainly provide a stimulus for group discussions in-session. There is an important added effect of more conversations taking place at home, within couples and families.

Feedback has prompted some changes, but in general the programme is well-received by participants. Anecdotal evidence suggests that patients and carers have benefited from the early input of appropriate material, as this enhances their informed decision-making later on in areas such as Preferred Priorities of Care, funeral planning, etc.

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"LIP" THE LIVING WITH ILLNESS PROGRAMMEIan Argent *St Helena Hospice, Essex, England*

10.1136/bmjspcare-2011-000105.127

Introduction For around 3 years, St Helena Hospice's LIP programme has brought together patients and carers to an