Motivations, Challenges and Rewards

Introduction Hospice volunteers have been credited with bringing a unique human dimension to an otherwise clinical setting and are considered to be core members of interdisciplinary palliative care teams. This study looks at volunteers who have a mainly patient contact role within the Hospice.

Over 100,000 volunteers are currently within the hospice movement—contributing more than 18 million hours of work to their services each year yet they remain a largely under-researched group.

Aims
- This study hopes to give this under researched group the opportunity to share their experiences with the Hospice and prospective volunteers
- To understand the motivating factors for patient contact volunteers
- To explore the experiences of those volunteers
- To understand the profile of the volunteers, to aid future recruitment of new volunteers and target training and support.

Methods
- Qualitative study of the experiences of patient contact volunteers using semi-structured interviews
- Ethics approval granted from Edge Hill University Ethics committee and the Integrated Hospice Governance Group
- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used.

Results
- 8 semi structured interviews conducted
- Volunteers are drawn to hospice work to make a difference
- Primary motivation is to discover more about themselves and others
- Relatively few negative challenges encountered
- Any negatives are cancelled out by the positive benefits gained
- Capacity for personal growth is strengthened
- Generic knowledge of symptoms would benefit the support they give.

Conclusions
- Volunteering is a two way process
- The ‘Psychological Contract’ between the Hospice and its volunteers is very healthy
- The organisation has good role deployment, shared values and good level's of communication.

Further developments
- Volunteer inductions adapted to meet the training needs of individuals (eg, boundaries of care, consideration of first aid training for drivers)
- Development of individual ‘Psychological Contracts’ between the hospice and volunteers.