DEVELOPING A WARD BASED RESEARCH HUB IN A HOSPICE; IMPROVING RESEARCHER ENGAGEMENT WITH STAFF IN THE HOSPICE ENVIRONMENT TO PROMOTE RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT AND ACTIVITY

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Abstract

Background Clinical research is important to ensure evidence-based care that improves terminal illness outcomes (Higginson. BMJ Support Palliat Care. 2016; 6(1): 2–4). Research in hospices can be challenging due to lack of time, support and research awareness amongst staff (Payne, Preston, Turner, et al. Research in palliative care – can hospices afford not to be involved? Help the Hospices, 2013). Closer working relationships with researchers in the clinical environment could increase visibility of research, help researchers to engage with staff and support clinicians to develop skills and competency.

Aims To create a research space in the clinical environment of a UK hospice, to enable researchers to be more visible and accessible to patients, caregivers and staff.

Methods Short term development works at the hospice has created the opportunity to re-purpose some clinical space on a temporary basis for a variety of projects. Through this initiative the research team converted a clinical room to a space for researchers to work in the clinical environment and engage with staff. The research hub was used for a number of activities such as displaying research work, carrying out interviews and providing a creative space for the development of the 12 month ‘designer in residence’ programme. Plans to evaluate the research hub are in progress.

Results Increased visibility of researchers has helped to promote a research culture in our hospice. The project has led to increased engagement from patients, caregivers, clinical and non-clinical staff. Hospice staff have increased participation in research activities such as abstract writing, conference attendance, grant applications and participating in journal club.

Conclusions Creating a research space in a clinical environment can provide opportunities for better engagement between researchers, patients, caregivers and staff. We are exploring opportunities to make the research hub a permanent feature in the hospice. Evaluation of the research hub is in progress to determine its success to explore potential for translation to other hospices.

Activities We chose to discuss at our weekly Journal Club the article, ‘Tidying rooms/tending hearts’, which explored the important role of the housekeeping staff. Five members of the housekeeping team attended, along with healthcare professionals from a range of hospice services. Our Journal Club is held in a hybrid format. The meeting was recorded with consent and subsequently other members of staff have listened to the recording.

Outcomes Attendees were engaged with the topic and the housekeeping team reported that:

- They took an overwhelming sense of pride in their role and of the high standards they strive for, which are evident in their excellent infection control audit results.
- Being with patients is an important and fulfilling part of their role.
- Conversations with patients often revolved around casual topics, but patients also discussed their illness and, occasionally, thoughts regarding death with them.
- The housekeeping team sometimes felt uncomfortable and helpless and did not feel they knew what to say or do when patients talked about death.
- Often, they would not know what to expect when they entered a patient’s room.

Implications for practice After the Journal Club meeting we met with the Senior leadership Team to discuss the outcomes and learning opportunities. This resulted in changes to practice aimed at providing palliative and end of life care training and improving pastoral support for the housekeeping team.

Conclusion Widening participation in the Journal Club had several unexpected benefits: for the participants, who felt more included in the hospice team; and, for patient care, as hospice clinicians were able to further recognise the important daily contact and support the housekeeping team provide to patients.