A CRITICAL EXPLORATION OF THE QUESTIONS ASKED
AND DISCUSSED BY PALLIATIVE CARE PATIENTS

Keith Morrison, Arthur Rank Hospice, Cambridge, UK

Background The use of an activity with palliative care patients
called ‘Blether’ gave us the opportunity to consider the ques-
tions asked by them in the day therapy setting. The questions
proffered and discussed were collected over 20 months. There
were no comparable studies found that looked at the ques-
tions palliative care patients ask or an analysis of the issues
and questions that appear to be of most concern.

Aim The aim of the study was to look at any common
themes that occur for the palliative care patient and which
they are prepared to consider in a group setting. This knowl-
gedge is helpful to those concerned in the pastoral care of
patients, be it spiritual or psychological.

Methods All of the questions proffered and discussed (as
voted for by the patient group) were collected. They were
categorised and then counted. They were then considered
from the perspective of pastoral theology.

Results In total 367 questions were generated and of them 54
were chosen to be discussed. Upon analysis of the data we
discovered that the majority of questions discussed in ‘Blether’
were around issues of ‘meaning’. A large number of patients
proffered questions about God and Faith, it was not propor-
tionally taken up as a subject for discussion. As well as ‘mean-
ing’ other high scoring categories were ‘Life issues’, and
‘Relationships’. It is hoped that the information gained is
helpful in informing the work of all practitioners concerned
with the spiritual and psychological care of palliative patients.

Conclusions Issues of meaning and purpose are at the fore-
front of the minds of the palliative care patients and this is
demonstrated when they are given the opportunity to ask a
‘Spiritual’ or ‘Big question’. The benefits of this are that
whilst anecdotal, patients appreciate this method and opportu-
nity to stop and reflect. This work was part of an MA disserta-
tion and has not as yet been published. ‘Blether’ (the activity referred to) was designed and delivered by Fire.Cloud
and funded by NHS Education for Scotland.

AFTER THE CONFERENCE... MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

Louise Moore, Linda Richmond, Hannah Syupa, Hannah Divil. Garden House Hospice Care, Letchworth, UK

Background Inspired by Miranda Quinney’s Life Stories pre-
Presented at Hospice UK conference, a unanimous decision was
made to implement the project for patients. Awareness had
grown through patient surveys and user groups that the need
to be listened to and heard was strong but not acknowledged
within a structured format. The Life Stories project known to
enhance wellbeing and self-esteem allows the telling of an
individual’s experiences in a constructive and supportive envi-
ronment. A project team looked at need, benefits, training
and funding to make Story Telling a reality.

Aims Telling and recording of patient stories meets identified
needs of out-patients which were not previously being fully
met through planned interventions. Project presents patients
with an opportunity to share significant stories from their life
with skilled support of experienced facilitators, stories are
heard, recorded and acknowledged. Funding was gained
through the Burdett Trust, Foundation of Nursing Studies
(FoNs). ‘Patients First’ Supporting nurse-led innovation work-
shops were attended. Staff training encouraged understanding
of the workshop and selection of people to participate.
Recruitment of experienced volunteers ensured stories would
be documented and presented. Funding enabled release of
staff, purchase of folders, props for prompting stories and fur-
ther project development.

Results Patients' positive feedback demonstrates the workshop’s
benefit. Impact was particularly significant for a gentleman
registered deaf. An interpreter was funded which opened up
a new opportunity for the patient. Three courses have run
attended by 16 people. Identified themes such as celebrations,
home and travel have inspired anecdotes, words, dreams and
reminiscence.

Conclusion The story began at conference, a new service for
patients is successfully running. It is hoped that sharing this
work will inspire others to take learning and put it into
action to create service improvements.

LIFE REVIEW OF HOSPICE PATIENTS BY VOLUNTEER
JOURNALISTS

Barbara Altounyan, The Hospice Biographers, London, UK

Background Many bereaved people regret not capturing the
voice and life story of loved ones who have died. Equally,
being interviewed about their life is known to be therapeutic
for the dying person and is a key strategy to underpin dignity.

(Chochinov 2002)

Aims The new charity, The Hospice Biographers, will train
journalists to interview hospice patients, in a systematic and
sensitive way, to capture the voice and life story as a precious
audio legacy for the next generation. Journalists are capable
and incisive interviewers, and ideally suited. Over the next
five years the aim is to record patients at 200 hospices across
the UK so that families will still be able to hear the voice and
stories long after their relative has died.

Method Hospices are invited to recommend journalists they
already know and trust (or their own Communications staff)
to volunteer for training by The Hospice Biographer team in
clusters of five or six hospices per region. In each regional
group, one hospice will host the training. The training course
includes practical technical support, open interviewing techni-
ques, privacy and confidentiality, emotional resilience, safe-
guarding and hospice regulation. Each hospice will then be
supplied with a bespoke audio recorder specifically designed
for use by Hospice Biographers. A pilot training course
for six hospices and 12 journalists in the West Midlands was
completed in May 2017 and has been evaluated via a struc-
tured questionnaire.

Results Lessons from the pilot included comments on the
scope of training and the need for more practical instruction
in the use of the recorder.

Next Steps A nationwide hospice road trip has confirmed huge
interest in the project! A further five hospices and 10 journal-
ists will be trained in October. Capacity planning and grant
applications are in now in progress to support national roll-
out.