Development of a hospice research culture through staff development, education and collaboration

Palliative care research is essential for evidence-based models of care that improve terminal illness outcomes. Investment in hospice research is essential for the projected increases in palliative needs. Hospices are crucial to practice and policy development, but there are many hospice research barriers. Well-documented problems include lack of research funding, governance challenges, methodological issues and absence of research culture. Hospices require strategic infrastructure and processes to progress from ‘research aware’ to full participation and research leadership. Over 2 years, Marie Curie Hospice Liverpool developed a series of quality improvement initiatives to establish a UK hospice research culture and improve research opportunities.

First, a governance process was established to facilitate the appropriate sponsorship and indemnity arrangements. This involved partnership with a local National Health Service Trust and University research teams. Patient and public engagement activities for research were established through our day therapy services. Patients met with researchers to provide perspectives for proposed research (from idea conception to research delivery). Second, a new morning board-round handover system provided focused clinical handover to hospice staff. As part of that, potential research participation eligibility was routinely discussed for all hospice inpatients. Third, Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group funds provided a doctor (AMcD) and nurse (SS) with protected research time over 6 months to support National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) North West Coast - Clinical Research Network (CRN). Academic posts are supported by the NIHR North West Coast - Clinical Research Network (CRN).

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