The role of the hospice volunteer in community settings

Conference or Workshop Item

How to cite:

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Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland

The role of the hospice volunteer in community settings

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Seminar overview

• National, regional and strategic contexts
• Findings from a literature review –
  • Benefits to hospice
  • Benefits to service users and carers
  • Benefits to volunteers
• Conclusions and next steps
National context

Policy direction in five nations:

- Service user preference regarding location of end of life care provision
- 74% of people would prefer to die at home yet 54% die in hospital (NICE, 2011)
- Voluntary sector key in making aspirations a reality
Regional context

• *Living Matters, Dying Matters*:  
  ‘families, carers and volunteers…the crucial cornerstone of this care’ (p.4)  
  ‘enabling all organisations to work collaboratively to design, deliver and improve palliative and end of life care services’ (p.38)

• *Transforming Your Care*:  
  ‘Services will regard home as the hub’ (p.7)
The contribution of volunteers

- Hospice enabled death needed in a range of settings
- Wide variety of hospice volunteer roles essential to effective service delivery
- Increased volunteer support = increased scope and size of provision
- Collaboration between hospice at home staff, volunteers and other community staff
Strategic direction

• ‘New models of health’ emphasize community response reliant on volunteer involvement
• Low numbers of volunteers providing direct care (NICE, 2011)
• Need for strategic approach to volunteer development and deployment (HtH, 2012)
Commissioned literature review

- Ascertain nature of volunteer activities
- Define the scope of volunteer roles
- Identify process regarding selection, induction and training of volunteers
- Outline the benefits of volunteering to the hospice, services users and carers, and volunteers themselves
Benefits to hospice

• Range of volunteer activity
• Driven by desire to improve quality
• Add diversity to professional team
• Bridge between hospice and community
• Recruitment, selection, induction, education and ongoing support
• Volunteer Value
Benefits to service users/carers

• Support across illness trajectory
• Increased patient/carer satisfaction
• Complementary to professional care
• Different types of support
• Improve quality and access
Conclusion (1)

- Volunteering benefits care providers, service users, carers and volunteers themselves
- But evidence unevenly spread
- Volunteering needs development to support palliative and end of life care in the community
- There are some gaps in current research
Benefits to volunteers

- Health and social benefits
- Volunteer satisfaction
- Education and training
- Motivations for volunteering
- Enduring appeal
- Challenges of volunteering
Conclusion (2)

- Research questions:
  - What training and support is needed?
  - How to involve volunteers in patient care?
  - What exactly can volunteers do?
  - How to avoid tension with paid staff?
  - How to provide culturally sensitive care?
  - What is the impact of volunteering on volunteers?
  - What is the impact of bereavement on volunteering?
  - How to maximize benefits and minimize challenges?
Conclusion (3)

Volunteers occupy ‘boundary spaces’ and research is needed to better understand how these boundaries are navigated.
Conclusion (4)

• Wider role of All Ireland Institute for Hospice and Palliative Care to promote practice development and explore gaps in knowledge
• Future collaborative research between academia and palliative care providers
Volunteers
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