

MAKING CONNECTIONS:

THE SHARED BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN THERAPY-LED WELLBEING GROUPS



“You can’t beat experience, little tips you are given help but hearing what other people do is the most important.”

Therapy-led wellbeing groups

LOROS Hospice provides a day therapy service to over 150 palliative patients who attend fortnightly and have access to many services including nursing, complementary therapy, creative therapies, occupational therapy and physiotherapy.

Within the developing day therapy provision, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and therapy assistants facilitate ‘Wellbeing sessions’ designed to deliver education on a range of topics. Whilst the content of the sessions is informative and educational for patients, therapists have noticed a growth in the sharing of patient experiences and the positive effect this has on self-esteem, confidence and a sense of cohesiveness.

Wellbeing groups aim to promote self-management of symptoms. Topics include mindfulness, managing breathlessness, falls prevention, managing fatigue, anxiety management and relaxation (RCOT 2011). Verbal feedback was gathered by facilitators on an informal basis at the end of sessions and then recorded in writing.

Therapist perspective

When patients first attend day therapy at LOROS, they complete an Integrated Palliative Care Outcome Scale (IPOS) questionnaire. These were collated and common themes were identified to guide the therapists’ planning of specific wellbeing groups.

Therapists and therapy assistants facilitate wellbeing groups to promote self-management of symptoms, groups usually have between 4 and 12 participants. They typically run for 45 minutes and are presented in an informal manner, with patients encouraged to contribute and participate in the group.

Patients have a greater awareness of the occupational therapy role following the wellbeing groups, often leading to appropriate self-referrals. Whilst the education of the group was the initial driver, patients have provided narrative feedback which indicates deeper psychological and emotional benefits. Patients have regularly made connections within the semi-structured group setting. The sessions provided space for new conversations and offered reflective time.

Peer support was found to be invaluable in helping individuals to manage and cope with their palliative condition.

Reference

Royal College of Occupational Therapists (2011) The route to success in end of life care – achieving quality for occupational therapy. London: RCOT

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