

An eight week pilot of a weekly Haematology Day Unit Information Evening event

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Background

One of our annual patient forums raised the issue of a gap in knowledge regarding local support services despite all patients receiving a new starter pack with leaflets and an information file for patients to browse through during treatments. Individual patients already have the opportunity to have a needs assessment and are sign posted to services from this, however people still felt that there were gaps in their knowledge regarding services they did not know about. To help bridge this gap, together with patients, we developed the idea of a weekly patient information evening, where local services were invited in to demonstrate their services, whilst having an opportunity to meet key workers and a chance to look round the day unit.

Method

An eight week pilot of a once weekly information evening event was commenced. It was planned to run once a week between the hours of 6pm-7pm when the unit was closing, using a different theme for each evening, such as hypnotherapy tasters, a chance to hear from local charities and professionals such as dieticians and physiotherapists. The evenings were staffed by two CNSs, one day unit chemotherapy nurse and two volunteers.

The trial was evaluated using anonymous evaluation forms for those who attended the evenings and half way through the trial a further questionnaire was sent out to people having treatment who were invited but not attending, to ask their reasons of non-attendance. questionnaires were returned.

Results

For those attending, the evaluations on the day rated the evenings as overwhelming excellent. All (100%) attending considered the evenings as "extremely valuable", they liked the timeliness, length of the evenings and use of volunteers/staff. However, actual attendance was disappointingly low, numbers ranged from 3-7 attendees, with an average of only four attendees. Of those whom returned the non-attendance questionnaires, the main reasons given for not attending were; timing of the evenings (dark winter evenings), a wish not to attend an additional appointment and a lack of transport.

Conclusion

The staff felt that the effort and energy required to put on the nights outweighed the benefit the few were getting out of them. As a result of the evaluation of the pilot we are now developing alternative ideas such as videoing the support service sessions, editing them to short segments and putting them on-line into a website accessible from home, or alternatively running the evenings once a month on a weekend. Overall, it was agreed that any additional steps to improve patient support were worth doing, however the challenge remains on how best to achieve this to enable equal access to all patients.

Patient quotes:

"Sounds like it is going to be great, well done!"

"I had so many questions when I started treatment so something like this would have been good for me"

"Great idea, much needed although I probably wouldn't use it myself"

"It's good to be able to speak to others going through the same experience"

"I felt really lost on my first visit, it would have been good to have a look around before I started my treatment."

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