

Bitesize Case Study: Transforming lives through community health seminars

Voluntary Sector North West

This case study is one in a series of studies curated to capture best practice, and highlight innovations, from the joint Health Education England (HEE) working across the North West and Voluntary Sector North West 'Learning Matters' awards 2017. The awards are part of a cross sector adult learning campaign delivered for the health and care sector through a number of key regional partnerships and collaborations. The overarching theme of the awards is simple: lifelong learning is good for people, organisations and health.

What was the issue or problem? What did you set out to do?

It was recognised by the Patient Participation Group of Court Thorn Surgery in Cumbria, who work closely with the GP Practice, that the services of General Practice are not the panacea of all ailments and care. Much can be done by the patients for the patients and their community. The balance of power can be shifted, to the patients and the public, by the provision of better information and advice.

What did you do? What was the intervention or initiative?

Transforming Lives through Community Health Seminars has been running for a year. A bi-monthly Health Seminar is put on within the local practice community that addresses the needs of patients and public within the catchment area of Court Thorn Surgery. The practice population spread is over 250 square miles in a rural setting within Eden Valley, Cumbria.



What were the Key Outcomes?

With this philosophy in mind the Patient Participation Group have fostered cross sector working and collaboration and as such, facilitated, planned and organised many community based talks provided by professionals, expert patients and complementary agencies from the third sector.

The topics of the health seminars are proposed by the patients within the community which effectively demonstrates the Patient Participation Group actively listening and working with communities to develop confidence in their own health. By appreciating the community's input and facilitating this educational development, more and more people of small hamlets and villages are attending these valuable seminars. With typical attendance of 50 people, this highlights the role of widening participation in healthcare education and a commitment to reduce health inequality.

As a rural community, every opportunity to publicise and market the seminars is accessed. Examples include: Parish Magazines, word of mouth, Practice Newsletter and Website, notes in prescriptions, community posters, BBC Cumbria, social media, community groups, primary schools and press releases.

You can also watch a video from the Participation Group entitled ['Community Seminar Community Defibrillator'](#)

Transforming Lives through Community Health Seminars has dramatically facilitated the 5 'C's in the community.

1. Confidence: Patients and the community now have more confidence in managing their own care, long term condition or making life long decisions. It turns a spotlight on prevention and self-management. Examples of this include the health seminars that covered:

- **Putting Your Affairs in Order** (Power of Attorney, Wills, Advance Care Planning).
- **Managing Diabetes** (Understanding diabetes and stories from expert patients)
- **Avoiding Diabetes** (What foods to eat and lifestyle choices to follow)
- **First Aid in the Community** (Managing heart attacks, cardiac arrest, bleeding, use of community defibrillator)
- **Copying with Arthritis** (Age profiles of both men and women, causes, treatments, exercise and healthy eating)
- **Influence of Gender on Your Health:** (Prostate cancer, erectile dysfunction, breast cancer, menopause)
- **Family Carer, Know your Rights!** (Carers assessment and the support of the Care Act, 2015)
- **Real Food Works:** (How to make exciting, enticing food for your health)
- **Dementia Matters:** (Understanding what dementia is, the role of dementia champions and how to communicate when someone lives with dementia)

2. Commonalities: Bringing expert patients together within the community to share their stories and to give patients a sense of belonging and reassurance they are 'not on their own'. Social value is tangible.

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What were the lessons learned?

The Patient Participation Group represents over 3000 patients, and the communities that the practice serves, so it is a challenge to ensure that the group truly represents their views. As a dispersed rural area this can be difficult. Nonetheless, taking the health seminars to the villages and hamlets enables the patients to learn, have a voice and share their own experiences. Capturing these views is facilitated by a short three question questionnaire at each seminar. In addition, the Patient Participation Group openly invites more members to become engaged ensuring a more diverse profile of the patients and carers. Virtual feedback is encouraged and accessed through email conversations and social media platforms.

The planning of the seminar could easily be a challenge as the group meets bi-monthly to plan and coordinate the seminar (arrange speaker, publicity, venue, refreshments). However, this is overcome as the Patient Participation Group use their wide and professional networks and contacts. Each member agrees their action and follows through. Working with the GP Practice enables publicity to be promoted to the wider audience through social media and direct private educational emails.



3. Collaboration: Embraces wellbeing and wellness agendas for both the public and the workforce. Puts patients at the centre of care - working with a number of professionals, agencies and charities has enabled relationship building and streamlining of referrals. For example: North West Ambulance Service, Carlisle and Eden Carers, North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust, Newcastle Building Society and Eden Valley Hospice.

4. Capacity: Promotes innovation and illustrates ingenuity as the NHS is continually finding provision of care a challenge as the population increases in age. Providing the comprehensive programme of Transforming Lives through Community Health Seminars, has enabled a population to take ownership of their health, reduce unnecessary hospital appointments and access to A&E departments.

5. Central information: Provision of a comprehensive programme of health seminars empowers the patients and community to look beyond GP services and to think what other information and resources are out there. This highlights social prescribing development and a 'more than medicine' agenda. This collaborative approach has assisted the patients to access information. This was further developed by patients signing up to a Self-Care Programme provided at the Practice.

Level of award:

Highly Commended - Projects

Organisation: Patient Participation Group of Court Thorn Surgery

Author and Key contact:

Jennie Sutton

jenniee@hotmail.co.uk