



FoNS Improvement Insights

Improving Patient Involvement in Stroke Care

Project team: Terence Kelly, Trainee Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Central Manchester Foundation NHS Trust; Sally Timmis, Trainee Advanced Nurse Practitioner, South Manchester University Hospitals NHS Trust; Melissa Brechin, Nurse Consultant, Salford Royal Foundation NHS Trust

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Project background

In 2001 the *Health and Social Care Act* (UK) placed a duty on NHS institutions to involve and consult patients and the public in planning and providing services. Since then a number of evidence based health policy initiatives have demonstrated how patient involvement in their care, increases satisfaction and produces positive health effects. Despite this, it is reported in a national survey in 2005 and a survey undertaken by the trust stroke specialist nurse, that stroke in-patients are not involved as much as they wished in decisions about their diagnosis, care and treatment. Whilst acknowledging communication and engagement with patients following a stroke will always pose a challenge, it is incumbent on those working in stroke services to be more proactive with their patients. The project was carried out by staff and patients from the stroke unit at Manchester Royal Infirmary which consists of an acute stroke and a rehabilitation ward. Both wards have integrated multi-disciplinary teams that care for patients in the acute and rehabilitation phase of their illness.

Aim and objectives of the project

The aim of the project was to develop new ways of working in the stroke service that recognised the contribution patients could make to improving care through communicating their needs to healthcare staff. To achieve this aim the objectives of the project were to:

- Engage with patients and provide a forum for them to express their views
- Engage staff to share their views on how patient ideas could be incorporated into new ways of working
- Educate staff on the benefits of patient involvement
- Provide staff with strategies to improve the way they communicate with patients

The project team believed that to develop practice those who would be affected by the change needed to be involved. The stakeholders in this project were both patients and staff, and the project team made a commitment to involve both these groups from the outset in the framing, delivery and completion of the project. A number of approaches were used to facilitate the changes in practice. These included:

- Staff discussion groups

Two multi-disciplinary staff groups were held (n=31) using a 'claims, concerns and issues' approach. Emergent questions related to; ensuring all patients were involved in their care, knowing what patients wanted from the service and finding the time to gather the right information.

- Patient discussion group

A process based on discovery interviews was used for volunteer patients and their carers (n=3) to offer their own narrative on being a person rather than a patient/carer, followed by discussion by the main group (n=9). Identified themes were; a wish to be more active participants in rehabilitation, the need for further staff training in communication, more information to be provided on strokes and preventing recurrence, more interaction and activities during rehabilitation and feelings of abandonment on discharge requiring further support.

- Education programmes

A key priority was the need to train/update all staff (not just clinical), in how communication affects individuals following a stroke. All staff (n=50) attended a full day training course run by two charitable organisations specialising in stroke care and management. Evaluative comments included staff gaining insights and empathy into the needs of patients with communication difficulties and skill development in the use of written and non verbal communication. More effective communication has resulted in more patient centred care decisions being made with care teams in line with current legislative demands and improvements to documentation promoting individualised care packages.

The project has led to the development of a working partnership with volunteers as a rehabilitation resource but this is still in its infancy.

Implications for practice:

- Facilitating the project was not a straightforward linear process with a defined start and end point. The focus shifted after discussion with patients and staff in the stroke unit about the project intentions
- The use of the claims, concerns and issues framework was helpful in drawing out what was important to the key stakeholders involved in the project
- Skilled facilitation during the discovery interview process produced a level of insight and understanding that was both helpful and humbling to the staff team as regards to the experience of stroke care
- The anticipated timescales for the project did not fully take into account the time required for detailed qualitative analysis of group work undertaken

A full project report including references can be accessed from: <http://www.fons.org/library/report-details.aspx?nstd=13187>

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