

Improving cancer support in Lanarkshire

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A new project in Lanarkshire has shown how technology can be used to support the delivery of person-centred care.

The project is part of the Transforming Care After Treatment programme and was set up to improve cancer care and support.


It offered a group of patients with lung cancer, online assessments of their support needs, followed by a care plan and support from a lung cancer nurse specialist.

The project received good feedback from patients and FACT-L questionnaires given to 26 patients found the project had positively impacted on them.

The Scottish Government's cancer strategy set out a clear ambition for cancer patients to receive person-centred care, and this project is an example of how this can be done in practice.

How the project worked

A secure questionnaire was made available online that asked patients about their needs. The questionnaire used was the Sheffield Profile of Referral and Assessment of Care (SPARC) which includes 45 questions, all aimed at finding out about patients' unmet medical, emotional, practical and financial needs.

 **275** people who had completed treatment for lung cancer and who were not receiving end of life or palliative care, were invited to participate in the project. Patients had to be computer literate or be able to nominate someone to complete the questionnaire online on their behalf. 21% (n = 58) of patients agreed to take part. Reasons for declining included not requiring additional support at the time (41%) and the project being electronic (21%).



Patients were asked to complete a SPARC assessment once a month for six months.



Their answers were then reviewed by a lung cancer clinical nurse specialist who talked to the patients about their responses and worked with them to put together a care plan outlining how they'd access any further support they wanted, from benefits advice to social support. Patients were also supported to self manage 2,771 concerns.

Results



248 eSPARC questionnaires were completed by 58 patients online, identifying **3,396 concerns**.



47% of patients (28 people) completed all six monthly assessments. The number of concerns seemed to plateau after the third assessment. This led the project team to suggest most patients didn't require follow up assessment for the full six-month period.



Patients were offered a telephone or face to face consultation after completing the eSPARC. The majority of patients opted for a telephone consultation (**88%**). This took on average 20 minutes compared to an average of 48 minutes for a face to face consultation.



71% of the 58 participants (41 patients) completed a patient experience questionnaire. 90% rated the service as excellent and 10% rated it as good.



26 patients completed another questionnaire offline FACT-L at months one, three and six. The FACT-L measures quality of life in patients with lung cancer or lung disease across five domains – physical, social/family, emotional and functional wellbeing. Data analysis by Edinburgh Napier University found that the project positively impacted on the lives of these 26 patients in relation to their physical and functional wellbeing.

“Doing this project has helped me to understand about my lung cancer.”

– Patient no. 24

What next?

While this project included only a small number of patients, the results were encouraging.

The project indicates that technology can be used to support the delivery of person-centred care for people with cancer. This project received positive feedback from patients and the clinical nurse specialist working with the patients also found it was an efficient way to deliver support.

Work is underway to expand the use of the online needs assessment to more people with lung cancer and extend it to head and neck, urology and breast cancer patients to understand further the impact of this model.

It is hoped the result of this project will be looked at by decision-makers in NHS boards across Scotland, with current and future learnings used to create a person-centred cancer care system that uses available technology to make improve patient care and support.

About TCAT

TCAT was set up to improve the way people with cancer are supported during and after treatment. It's a partnership between the Scottish Government, Macmillan Cancer Support, NHS Scotland and local authorities. It tests and spreads new models of care and support built around what people with cancer need.