The Nursing times award for Enhancing Patient Dignity goes to......Velindre NHS Trust!

Background to the award.....

Velindre’s Patient Dignity group was set up in 2009 by 4 nurses. They were all attending the RCN Dignity Campaign course and their tutor had told them that the worst thing they could do was to leave and do nothing. The nurses returned and met over coffee to see what they could do. They started by looking at observations of care in the mornings and evenings on the wards. They discovered several things, e.g. the issues with curtains. They noted that during examinations or consultations or personal care time, there was a tendency for members of staff not to stop going about their duties (for example, delivery of meals or drinks or popping their heads around the curtain to ask something). They had also noted that, on one occasion, staff on a ward had pulled a curtain around a patient’s bed in order to wash them, but had not curtained off the side of the bed facing the window – not realising that at night time, this had the effect of being like a mirror, allowing the rest of the ward to see what was happening behind the curtain. Another issue were the identification badges, which all had “Staff” on them.

What did they do next?

The nurses set up a patient dignity group to look at solving these and other issues. The group started with nursing staff and it soon grew to 26 individuals. Everyone was included and the group had representation ranging from porters, catering, pharmacy, nursing, staff side, patient representatives and carer representatives all working together to find solutions.

The group decided to set up a dignity code, and one of their first actions was to design a traffic light system to put outside doors and curtains. They also brought clothes pegs. The clothes pegs were red and were used to clip together the curtain and offer a visual sign that they should check before opening or entering the curtained area.

The Dignity Code was launched, with funding obtained for pens, mouse mats and badges. The Chair, Chief Executive and Non Executives took part.

Other developments that the group have been involved in include :-

- New ID badges, which include job titles. These were developed with advice from Infection Control to ensure that they were compliant.
• The group had some new hospital gowns designed with special sleeves. The sleeves were designed to enable access for drips etc and other essential examinations, whilst not gaping. Another addition was making the gowns wrap around, with ties being positioned at the front. These were Ordered and taking into account larger people.

• They also put a guide together on how to deal with soiled clothing on the wards, so that family members were not asked to deal with soiled clothing at home.

Capturing information

The group was still receiving concerns around service provision and decided that the best way to capture this would be to use the Datix system.

Datix is patient safety software for healthcare risk management, incident and adverse event reporting. The group noted that there was currently not category for capturing dignity concerns and so this was added. The different classifications used to capture these concerns were split into environment, communication and personal.

The group wanted staff to feel empowered to report around dignity and respect, so an hour long training session was developed which explored what dignity is, what it means, looking for examples and links to the Human Rights Act. The aim was for all staff, not just nurses, to receive it.

The group wanted to encourage concerns to come forward, such as letters, comments, and emails. These were all entered onto the system and any concerns raised were then sent to the dignity group to identify possible solutions. e.g. When someone has stayed in hospital, they have an assessment before they are discharged to go home, to see if they are able to walk up and down stairs. Initially, this assessment would take place in the main corridor where the stairs (and also main entrance) were. The group decided that this situation should not be allowed to continue, so a funding application to the Friends of Velindre proved successful, allowing a special set of stairs to be purchased. A room was found where the stairs assessment could be conducted in private.

All these examples of the changes which have been made through the work of the group have been fed back to staff through training, illustrating how the changes were incorporated and the difference they made. Some changes have been more costly than others.

One of the more complex issues tackled by the group has been the placement of the hospital mortuary. At present, the mortuary is at the back of the hospital and is overlooked by a residential area. A business case has been developed and put forward which presents a possible solution for both the new location and the necessary finances.

Getting the Award

Ceri had had sight of the categories for the Nursing Times awards, so she contacted the Chief Executive and Chair of the Trust and they were both in support of her submitting the scheme for an award.

The form was soon filled in and the supporting evidence was compiled. In August of this year they were contacted and informed that they'd been short listed in the national Award. Ceri and Michele then had to prepare for a 25 minute presentation to the awards panel in September. Michele Pengelly (Specialist Nurse of Cancer Centre & Chair of patient dignity group) and Ceri went to present. Both felt that it didn't go very well, and that as they were the last to present, that the panel looked tired and had only asked two questions.
Ceri noted however that many of the projects they were in competition with had come about as a result/reaction to the Francis Report. This scheme, however, had started long before that which Ceri was confident would go in their favour.

The Award ceremony took place on the 30th October. Three people from the group were allowed to go and these were Ceri and Michele (as leads of the scheme) and Sue Hopkins (Out Patients Nurse Manager). An additional invitation to attend Clarence House & meet Prince Charles was opened up to the wider group and Julia Taylor (one of nurses on ward & part of group) was picked to attend. With all these arrangements in place, the Trust was still not aware whether they had been successful.

Ceri and the Trust were thrilled to be announced as the winners!

What's next?

The Trust won £1,000 as part of their prize. The group are going to look at how best to spend this – they have lots of plans. Ceri is hoping to roll out the dignity training to the Welsh Blood Service.

Ceri will continue to build on reviewing the dignity training and including new case studies to keep it fresh using Datix stories and the successes of the Dignity Group.

This award is going to be sent around each of the Departments that have representation on the group to ensure that it’s not just sitting on a shelf. There are plans to put an award cupboard in reception so patients can see. Ceri believes that this will offer reassurance to people coming into the Trust that dignity, safety and respect are core values – “we don't just treat the cancer, we treat the person.”

If you would like to find out more about the work of the Patient Dignity Group, please contact Ceri Harris – email ceri.harris3@wales.nhs.uk or telephone 029 20 196161.