Caring Communities Program - Project Overview

Organisation: The Palliative care Unit, Hollywood Private Hospital
Name of Project: Learn Now, Live Well
Length of Project: 3 years

Project Summary

This project aims to increase support for family members caring for palliative care patients at home, through an education and support program. The "Learn Now, Live Well" project has been specifically designed to better prepare caregivers with relevant education and resources prior to discharge. Course topics include the physical side of caring, pharmacology, symptom control, nutrition and exercise, and caring for the caregiver. The program specifically targets caregivers from within Hollywood Private Hospital, including those on the palliative care unit, as well as the oncology and haematology unit, and other medical units throughout the hospital. As such, the program in not specifically cancer focused, but also aims to meet the needs of caregivers, caring for people with non-malignant disease.

As well as the inpatient focus, there is also a community component to the program. This format will see the program in a condensed format at 3 metropolitan community locations. This module of the program will be run in collaboration with the Silver Chain Hospice Service, and will specifically target caregivers already in the community who might benefit from extra education and support.

Project Objectives

The project objectives are outlined as follows.

1. To enhance the knowledge and skills of caregivers, so they can more confidently provide care in the community setting.
2. To increase caregivers knowledge about the provision of personal care, medications, symptom control, nutrition, exercise and self care.
3. To decrease the amount of time spent in hospital, and to increase the amount of time spent at home.
4. To improve collaborative relationships between providers within and external to Hollywood private Hospital.

Project Activities:

The main project activities are outlines as follows.

1. Educational session development (in collaboration with Edith Cowan University)
2. Facilitate 5 modules over a 2 week period (times to be determined.
    - The physical side of caring; Pharmacology; Symptom Control; Nutrition and exercise; Caring for the caregiver.
3. To run a condensed module for community based patients in collaboration with Silver Chain ... Hospice Service.
4. Formal project evaluation.

Main Message

What you did

- LNLW Program aimed to increased carers knowledge and confidence on caring for a family member. The LNLW Program was developed, drawing on evidence base and review by experts in the field and carers.
- The LNLW Program is a structured education program delivered via six education modules, that can be offered as a program or stand alone module.
- Following successful pilot testing, 205 carers were recruited to participate in the project. The program was delivered in institutional and community based settings.

What has been learned?

- Structured education for carers can increase carer knowledge and confidence
- Attendance at education program was identified as supportive and reduced social isolation for carers
- Health education for carers needs to have large support component.
- Family caregivers require practical information that is easy to apply.
- When developing health education, innovative ideas towards teaching, which promote group discussions, are vital.
- Multidisciplinary and carer input in all stages of the project facilitates a better and more meaningful outcome
- The coordinator/facilitator roles are critical, as is the need for ongoing organisational, practical and professional support. It is through this access to information and support that key decisions can easily be achieved for the benefit of the project.
- The skill of the facilitator may be a critical factor in the success of the program

What is useful to other projects/communities?

- The manual developed as part of this project will enable other health care professionals to offer the LNLW Program and resources developed for this project.

What have been the benefits of disseminating information about this project?

- LNLW has helped raise the profile for two important concepts. The first is understanding the principles concerning palliative care and the second is raising awareness of the unmet need of many carers.
- The need for organisational support to deliver quality education programs and collaboration was highlighted (and achieved) during this project.
- The benefits of collaboration can reduce unnecessary duplication of resource materials and maximise the benefits to a broader community.

What needs to happen in order to sustain the key achievements of this project?

- The availability of further funding for LNLW; Train the Trainer enables the project team to ensure that LNLW is sustainable for a further year. It is envisaged that teaching HCP will have a "domino effect". That is once someone within that organization has attend LNLW train the trainer then they will be able to teach other HCP in their organisation.

- Ongoing funding of an experienced and qualified group facilitator is crucial for the program to be maintained and further development opportunities.

What resources did you develop and are they available to others?

Following are a list of the resources developed from the LNLW programme.

- LNLW Manual – This manual will be further refined in the next stage of the project to be a train the trainer package
- PowerPoint slides for each session
- DL Brochures
- Evaluation forms for each session (for the purpose of the current evaluation only)
- Feedback Form for the sessions
- Cookbook
- Pain myth cards