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### A multi-professional communication skills programme: challenges and evaluation

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This presentation describes a multi-professional four-day communication skills programme in which participants explore the challenges of communicating with cancer patients and their families.

Effective communication is a vital component of the care of patients with cancer which facilitates patients' adaptation and enhances professional assessment. Despite the availability of a variety of programmes in cancer and palliative care, this aspect of care continues to present major challenges to nurses and other health care professionals. Frequently, professionals report unease and lack confidence when discussing sensitive issues, such as death, dying and sexuality, to this client group. It is acknowledged that health professionals often lack the requisite skills to communicate meaningfully with this patient group and that tangible benefits accrue from training in this area.

Using simulated patients, video feedback and small group discussions; this multi-professional programme seeks to provide a forum that enables participants to acquire confidence and competence in a safe, comfortable and non-threatening environment.

The programme structure presents several organisational challenges in terms of providing a learning experience that addresses the educational needs of participants from a variety of clinical backgrounds and prior educational level.

Initial evaluations suggest that the programme is successful in addressing these challenges and in providing a meaningful and rewarding learning experience.

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### Can your personality affect the way in which you communicate?

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**Introduction:** The way in which we perceive the world and make judgments has long been shown to impact on the way we communicate with each other. Recent research into nurses personality types has shown that 'sensing' and 'feeling' individuals demonstrate greater warmth, empathy and the ability to relate well to others whilst preferring established routine and factually based information. Whilst ample evidence exists that skills-focussed training can enhance the ability to communicate more effectively with others, the link between personality type and the effectiveness of communication skills training remains largely unexplored. **Aim:** To investigate the link between personality and the effectiveness of a skills-based communication training programme. **Method:** Cancer/palliative care nurses completed the 16PF personality inventory prior to undertaking communication skills training. Audio taped patient assessments were rated across 9 communication areas pre and post training. Pre and post scores on the 9 areas were compared (pair t-tests) and relationships between personality, communication skills and demographic variables investigated (Pearson's correlation coefficient). **Results:** 167 nurses completed the study. Training led to statistically significant improvements across all 9 areas ( $p < .001$ ). Of the four areas of communication that revealed the greatest improvement, three carried a high emotional loading. Emotionally sensitive individuals perform better on areas which are more emotionally laden, whereas those who are more practical and down to earth perform better in areas requiring straightforward information giving and taking. The results will be discussed in relation to their importance for communication skills training.

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### The research nurse job profile in The Netherlands

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Due to the increased involvement of nurses in clinical trials, the stricter quality requirements and rules, the need to define the profession of research nurse (RN), it was felt that the drafting of a Research Nurse Job profile would be desirable. On the basis of which a definition can be developed with reference to the functions, responsibilities, level of qualifications and the

boundaries of the profession. The aim was to pursue recognition of the local authorities for the Dutch educational program and curriculum, which implies the registration as a nursing specialization, registration of the program for research nursing. The document the professional core business.

**Methods:** The Research Dutch Nurse Job Profile working group was set up for this purpose. It is composed of research nurses from the different establishments where research nurses work. A literature study of the role of the RN was performed. The resulting job profile was also submitted to a reference group in order to obtain more public support for this initiative (Delphi method). The RNJ Profile is derived from the Nursing Profession Profile as published by the National Council for Public. The objectives are: to draft an unambiguous job profile for research nurses; to clarify the specific expertise of the research nurse; to standardize a professional name, to promote the systematic education of research nurses.

**Results:** The profile contents covers qualifications, skills and responsibilities, a career ladder, professional attitude and the research related problems. The skills are classified in six key skills with their related sub-skills; 1. participate in co-operative frameworks and consultative structures; 2. co-ordinate the different phases of clinical trials in compliance with the applicable national and international regulatory requirements; 3. guide and assist the trial subject in a client-based approach before, during and after participation in the trial; 4. take care of the drug accountability and other trial material and of the safety of the trial subject; 5. safely prepare, carry out, evaluate and support investigational tests and nursing actions; 6. process the trial documents and the administration of clinical trials.

**Conclusion:** This document is important for every nurse involved in research; the RNJ profile will make a significant contribution to further the professional career development of research nurses by introducing more uniformity into the various roles they have to play and what is expected of them.

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### The role of the plastic surgery clinical nurse specialist in an oncological setting

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**Purpose:** The role of the clinical nurse specialist within an oncological plastic surgery department has had a positive response. At the Christie Hospital in Manchester, two clinical nurse specialists task share and impact in pre-operative clinics, nurse led dressing clinics, ward rounds and assist in the operating theatre. These roles enable patients to receive holistic care.

**Method:** An audit of the roles and service was undertaken, assessment being performed by the use of questionnaires to patients and colleagues. A time log was maintained for the duration of the audit.

**Results:** The audit results have now been collated and the benefit to patients and the service in terms of improved care, reduction in care costs, reduction in operative cancellation have been demonstrated. Improvements in patient education and communication with a high degree of patient satisfaction have all been expressed in the questionnaires.

**Conclusion:** In plastic surgery, the development of the role of the clinical nurse specialists has evolved as a result of the changes within the NHS which is an ongoing national issue incorporating the reduction of junior doctors hours. In line with the Patients Charter, the provision of clear information and explanation of proposed treatment are mandatory. Preoperative assessment has a vital role to play in obtaining informed consent to oncological surgical intervention. The preoperative assessment clinic facilitates health promotion and health education, enabling continuity of care from diagnosis throughout treatment.

The service provided by the clinical nurse specialist has been shown to be beneficial not only to the patients but to the care team and to the care provision service itself. Plans to expand the service have been vilified.

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### Transmural multidisciplinary communication training

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Good communication between caregiver and patient and among caregivers is of major concern for a careful support of the oncology patient. To improve the quality of communication Twenteborg Hospital has developed a training in cooperation with NIGZ and IKST. The main objects of this training are: