

Improving MS patient-centred care: the development of a communication tool

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Introduction

The Multiple Sclerosis (MS) nursing service were informed by several people with MS that their specific neurological needs were not being met adequately during inpatient stays at their local district general hospital. They reported that healthcare staff did not understand the variability of MS symptoms and the potential for daily fluctuation in their abilities. These concerns were also reported by the local MS Society branches. In 2007-2008 there were a total of 207 admissions for MS patients with non-neurological problems across two general hospitals.

Needs identified

- To improve the patient's experience whilst in hospital;
- To meet the National Service Framework for Long-term Conditions Quality Requirement 11 which states that people with long-term neurological conditions are to have their specific neurological needs met while receiving care for other reasons in any health or social care setting.

Solutions identified

- Increasing health and social care staff awareness of MS by providing teaching sessions;
- Raising health and social care staff awareness of the role of the Multiple Sclerosis Specialist Nurse (MSSN) by placing posters on the main wards for admission;
- Create a generic communication tool for people with MS to use to communicate their individual neurological needs to healthcare staff.

Developing the communication tool

Aims

1. For all individuals with MS to have access to the communication tool, for use in any health or social care setting;
2. For all individuals with MS to be able to inform healthcare staff about their specific neurological needs, using the communication tool as supportive documentation.

Method

- Research into currently available/similar tools
- First draft written by MSSNs then reviewed by Multi disciplinary team (MDT)
- Second draft incorporating MDT feedback
- Patient focus group
- Final draft (Box 1) incorporating patient feedback
- Reviewed and approved by hospital patient information group
- Professional printing
- Distribution to people with MS known to MS nursing service and to other people with MS via the local MS Society branches.



Focus group

Plans for review

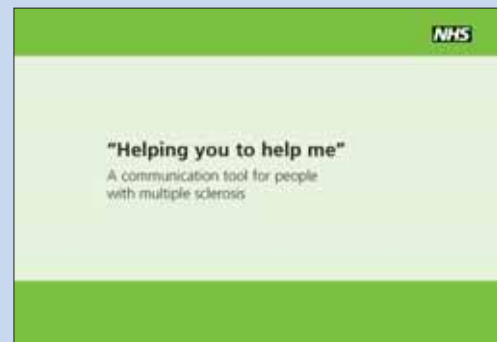
- Evaluation form sent with communication tool, to be returned to MSSN after first use;
- Arrange patient focus group if negative experiences reported;
- Evaluation form to be sent to lead nurse of main admission wards to gain feedback from healthcare professionals.

Box 1

Contents of communication tool:

- Guidance for patients and healthcare professionals
- Personal details including contact details for healthcare professionals involved
- Communication
- Nutrition
- Personal hygiene
- Toileting
- Sensory symptoms
- Mobility
- Environmental considerations
- Other symptoms affecting function
- Medications
- Equipment used
- Discharge arrangements.

Each section highlights different levels of ability with easy to use tick boxes for all that apply, including space for personal comments.



References

'Personal details for admission to hospital', MS Society leaflet, 2000.
'What you need to know about my condition', The Neurological Alliance.
The National Service Framework for Long-term conditions, Department of Health, 2005.

Acknowledgements

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