

Case study



South London Healthcare NHS Trust Communication Skills Course “Taking the Patient Experience to Heart” with Obstetrics & Gynaecology Department, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Woolwich on 26th June 2009



Staff reflect on their day and read their notes and action plans

We are delighted to share with you our brilliant experiences of the South London Healthcare women’s services first communication skills course. It is well established nationally and locally that the overwhelming majority of women’s complaints relate to staff communication and/or attitude issues. Most of our pregnant women are healthy going through the most positive life-changing and memorable time of their lives with expectations to match. Sometimes healthy women become unwell patients very quickly and unpredictably requiring emergency high risk obstetric intervention – a major deviation from their anticipated birth-plan. This unique service-user population provides great challenges to us in delivering not just safe and high quality medical care, but also a desirable patient journey.

A call to action

Following the viewing of a very moving patient’s video diary in November 2008 an urgent need for multi-professional training in communication skills was realized. A core team consisting of Sally Watkinson, Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist; Mark Cole, Head of Learning and Development; Helen Knower, Senior Specialist Midwife and Samiksha Patel, Specialist Registrar worked closely to produce this pioneering new course. This was attended by the full spectrum of grades of Obstetricians, Midwives, Healthcare Assistants, Maternity Support Workers, Clerical Officers and Managers.



Staff and patients listened to different experiences

What we did

The course was held in the beautiful University of Greenwich building over-looking the river Thames and was generously sponsored by our pharmaceutical reps from Schering and Recordati. The morning session involved a moving session using recent users of the service who kindly shared their powerful experiences of communication good and bad with us. This was brilliantly facilitated by a team from NHS Elect. In the afternoon we enjoyed an interactive session with a team of five actors from Roleplay UK. The session involved running a common work-place scenario, but having the opportunity to influence communication behaviour.

Reflections and learning

“Superb”

Nigel Perks, Clinical Director

“Thought-provoking and entertaining, but serious messages made”

Sara Bradford, Supervisor of Midwives

“It helped me realise that communication is as important as clinical care”

Amani Marmash, SpR

“This gave me an insight into how my everyday working life impacts on patients”

Joanne Lloyd, Health Care Assistant

The service users who participated also felt empowered by the experience, one commenting that she believed it helped her to express her feelings surrounding the good and not so perfect aspects of her experience.

Next stage

The next phase of this project is to roll out this work to the wider newly-formed trust. We plan to invite security staff, paediatric and anaesthetic teams and sonographers to join the truly multi-professional group.

Any comments about this project will be very warmly received.

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Actors role play 'communication' scenarios



Staff coaching the 'Healthcare' Actors on ways to improve on their communication skills