

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Alzheimer's Cafe Bray - An Integrated Hospital and Community Patient-Centred Approach

17th International Conference on Integrated Care, Dublin, 08-10 May 2017

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Introduction: The idea of an Alzheimer's Cafe in North Wicklow developed when in the hospital we noted a lack of follow on support and education for people diagnosed with dementia and their carers. It was also noted that this was an increasing issue amongst our local population. Three Health and Social Care Professionals from St Columcille's Hospital attended training on Alzheimer's Cafe's in order to try and establish one in our locality.

Practice Change Implemented: The Alzheimer's Cafe Bray promotes early diagnosis, reducing stigma, and caring for older people in their home environment by providing education, support and information in an accessible and community focused way.

Aims and Theory of Change: The aim was to set up an Alzheimer's Café - a relaxed space where people with all types of dementia and their families/carers can come together for socialisation, education and support under a person-centred ethos and to promote resilience. The theory is that by "role-modelling positive language, accurate concepts, an accepting attitude, sensitive communication and warm interactions" (Jones 2010: 34) we can destigmatise dementia and provide support (National Dementia Strategy 2014)

Targeted population and stakeholders: The targeted population is people with dementia in South Dublin and North Wicklow and those who care for them. The stakeholders are the hospital staff, the community support services, local politicians, people with dementia and those caring for them. Key stakeholders were invited to form a steering committee. Those who attended the first Alzheimer's Cafe were surveyed so the educational 'themes' set for the year reflected their needs thereby ensuring an age-friendly environment.

Timeline: The first meeting of the steering committee was in November 2015 and we gave ourselves a lead in time of 6 months which we accomplished. Core tasks of fundraising; sourcing accommodation & equipment; marketing & communication and recruiting volunteers were assigned. Monthly progress meetings were held.

Highlights: While the Alzheimer Cafe movement started in the Netherlands in 1997 and there are a number of them in Ireland at this stage; this integrated initiative between hospital and community is a new way to promote highly effective co-ordinated care. The innovation is that a team with knowledge, expertise and experience can provide the education necessary without

having to outsource the educational piece. We provide support for people with dementia, their families/carers and in the process enhance working relationships and communication across services. 25 PwD and carers and 8 volunteers on average attend per month. 20 have returned to at least 7 out of 8 of our monthly Alzheimer's Cafe's. 100% of the people who attended and provided feedback in the early stages rated the AC as a 'very positive experience' with a 'warm, easy atmosphere'. In the most recent survey 94% of respondents now felt more comfortable discussing dementia. This supports families caring for older people and older people's care in the home environment. 100% of respondents stated the volunteers were 'approachable and friendly'.

Sustainability: We are a group that meets monthly in an accessible and available location that is given to us free of charge. We receive donations of food from the hospital and money raised through fundraising. This ensures it is an achievable and sustainable piece of work that promotes positive ageing and dignity.

Transferability: The Alzheimer's Cafe Bray and the Ireland East Hospital Group are of the opinion that this highly innovative way of developing a long-standing support service is highly transferable. In fact, the IEHG have created a target that our approach is replicated across all hospitals in this group by 2019.

References:

- 1- Department of Health. The Irish National Dementia Strategy. 2014.
- 2- Jones GMM. The Alzheimer Café: Why it Works. 2010.

Keywords: dementia; resilience; community; carer; social
