Cumbria Partnership NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Using NICE quality standards to review dementia and end of life services

Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust used the NICE quality standards for end of life care and dementia to review current practice and identify ways of improving patient care.

"The NICE quality standard has provided a key template for developing the evidence based care pathways which are fundamental to delivering excellent services across a range of rural and urban settings."

Dr John Howarth, Director of Integration, Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Where are we now?

The Trust provides mental health and community services across the whole of Cumbria for a population of half a million people, including nine community hospitals.

The population has a higher proportion of older people than anywhere else in England, and this proportion is rising all the time. Demand for dementia care, and end of life services is set to rise dramatically, with increasing pressure on resources.

The Trust's Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN) framework for 2012-13 provided the impetus to conduct thorough reviews of both services.

Three sources of information were used for each review: patient/carer stories, performance and outcomes data, and the views of stakeholders gathered through a series of structured workshops. The three data sets were triangulated against the quality standards to form an assessment of current provision against the national standard, and to identify priorities for improvement.

Identifying future direction for services

The reviews showed that there were areas of excellence in both services, but that provision was inconsistent in different areas of the county and areas where services could be improved.

The reviews produced a series of recommendations, which were agreed jointly between providers, and covered areas including:

- improved co-ordination between providers
- investment in training and telehealth to improve services
- systematic adoption of best practice in identifying patients and using care pathways to ensure optimum care
- provision of improved and consistent information for patients, carers and professionals

The Trust also recommended that commissioners and provider organisations support the systematic use of the End of Life Care Quality Assessment (ELCQuA) tool by end of Q2 2013/14. The tool measures progress relevant to the 16 statements in the NICE end of life care quality standard.

Quality standards as a framework for systematic review – learning points

Published in November 2011, the end of life care standard contains 16 quality statements designed to act as markers of high-quality care. The dementia quality standard was launched in March 2011 and consists of 13 quality statements.

The Trust highly recommends using NICE quality standards, where they exist, as a framework for a systematic review of services. The statements are clear and referenced to underlying evidence, and NICE's reputation means that there is no need to debate the definition of high quality care - all providers and commissioners can sign up to the quality standards as the working definition.

Staff were all aware of, and working to NICE guidance, but didn't understand what the quality standard was for. Using the quality standard as the framework for the review has helped to make this clear, and makes explicit to commissioners exactly where each of the provider organisations is contributing to delivering the relevant outcomes.

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