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Circle of Care: Embedding an Arts Based Professional Development Programme at Guy’s and St Thomas’ Trust (2018)

The Circle of Care (CC) framework and the programme of courses delivered by Performing Medicine at Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT), support compassionate, safe patient care through building resilient healthcare professionals equipped with the tools to communicate effectively in chaotic, busy environments, and to better look after themselves and each other. The aim of the partnership with GSTT was to explore how this professional development programme could be embedded at the Trust to help deliver the organisation’s strategic objectives.

What we achieved

Our work generated significant interest among staff, reaching over 500 employees; we collected pre and post surveys from 131 people of whom 16 gave semi-structured interviews two months after attending an event.

We delivered:

- 7 ‘elective’ courses: *Managing Stress (x2); Taking Care (x2); Circle of Care for Clinical Educators (x2); and Effective Communication (x1)*
- 3 ‘tailored’ courses: *Team Building (x1) and Managing Stress (x2)*
- 7 contributions to existing training programmes: *New Consultants Programme and Established Consultants sessions*
- 13 ‘pop-up’ engagement sessions: *Make Yourself Heard; Massage; and Yoga*

Key impacts

Participants’ responses to the programme were overwhelmingly positive, finding that the programme nurtured skills which were **useful, applicable and lasting**:

USEFUL: 95% of participants found the sessions very useful (77%) or useful (18%) in gaining personal or professional development support:

“So powerful”, “Eye-opening”
“I loved it. I felt like I’ve grown.”

APPLICABLE AND LASTING: 96% of participants had learnt and planned to apply, or have since applied, particular techniques in their work. 100% of people interviewed months later were still thinking about the course, trying to implement what they had learnt, and were experiencing more positive communication with colleagues and patients and an improved sense of wellbeing.

80%

reported increased awareness of the need to manage their own stress when caring for others

“I’m looking at things in a different way in my day to day practice”

100%

of people interviewed months later were still using what they’d learnt

“It makes you feel that you have value”

Particular strengths of the programme that participants highlighted were:

SELF-CARE: Participants described the unique qualities of the programme in legitimising self-care. 100% of participants recognized the importance of managing their own stress at work and saw the relationship to better care for others.

“I don’t eat lunch at my desk anymore and I do stretching exercises”

FACILITATORS AND INTERACTIVE APPROACH: Participants highlighted the benefits of the facilitators’ unique arts and health experience and flexible, interactive approaches to clinical teaching and learning, their ability to gel with participants, and the crucial fact that they practice what they preach:

“The people running it were absolutely brilliant. With their theatre background, they were external people with fresh eyes. They know about presenting the body and assuming roles. They made a big difference”

“...it was much more interactive than usual and the exercises – it stays with you longer and you do come away and take more action”

Summary: Future of the programme

When encouraged to suggest changes to their programme, 89% of participants wanted no changes and a further 8% wanted more sessions, and were already recommending it to colleagues. It is clear from the more detailed comments that only minor tweaks to the structure and content of courses need to be considered and that they should continue to run well even if unchanged.

In summary, there is ample evidence that people feel empowered by what they have learnt and particularly by what they expect to use and what they are doing differently. Importantly, providing courses focused on self-care appears to be a powerful way of enhancing staff morale:

“Everyone should do it, because, in the NHS right now, there are so many changes and so many issues... There is so much pressure because we are dealing with people’s lives here and the responsibility and the stress that comes with that; you can’t quantify that stress.” Health Visitor

“It makes you feel that you have value – giving us something very much for us. Having more events like this will improve morale. Knowing that management is open to this makes you feel more valued. It should be mandatory.” Nurse

This summary is based on an independent evaluation undertaken by David Streatfield, Information Management Associates. Copies of the full report are available on request.