



95%

of participants
found the event
very useful or
useful

“Very relevant
to theatre
situations and
insightful.”

The event
promoted
learning and
reflection and
empowered
participants

“Addressing
real issues
with a positive
outlook.”

Circle of Care: Theatres Forum (2019)

Circle of Care is a framework that helps us to think about, practice and demonstrate high quality compassionate care, created by Clod Ensemble's Performing Medicine team in collaboration with Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT). Circle of Care describes a multi-directional flow of care between healthcare professionals and their colleagues, patients and carers and also positions 'self-care' – the way healthcare professionals care for themselves – as fundamental to achieving effective healthcare. At the centre of the Circle of Care is a skills compass which will help navigate the obstacles getting in the way of the flow of care.

Between November 2018 - July 2019, Performing Medicine worked with the leadership team across surgical departments at GSTT to pilot an interactive forum as part of an audit day for staff working in operating theatres. The aim of the intervention was to develop skills identified in the CC framework to improve safety and communication in surgical teams. The interactive forum was created through a series of interviews and observations with staff, bringing to the surface some of the concerns around multi-disciplinary teamworking, speaking up, and difficult conversations that staff in this department had highlighted.

What we achieved

Approximately 200 staff from across theatres (including nurses, surgeons and anaesthetists) attended the audit day and we collected post-event questionnaires from 77 participants. We conducted in-depth follow up interviews with 5 members of the surgical leadership team.

It is evident both from the post-event questionnaires and from the interviews that this pilot forum was very successful in raising issues about theatre-related behaviour and did so in ways that actively engaged the participants. Opportunities were provided to reflect on the scenarios, make suggestions and identify various ways of dealing with inappropriate behaviours, and all this was done in a non-threatening environment that many participants found empowering.

Key impacts

Participants' responses to the event were overwhelmingly positive, finding that it was **very useful or useful (95%)**, reflecting a **realistic** scenario (**59%**), and drawing out important learning points relating to **communication, teamworking** (mentioned by 16 people each) and the **lasting effects of people's behaviour** (mentioned by 15 people) at work.

They found the **interactive approach** was effective, **novel**, and the **quality of the performance was high**. The effects of this were to **promote learning** and **reflection** and **empower participants**.

Participants also commented on the effectiveness of the approach, highlighting the following elements as being particularly important:

Interactive:

Mentioned by 34 people (44%)

“The room became interactive and interested”
as the session unfolded.

“I was very interested, it had me engaged the whole time.”

**Quality of the actors/
performance:**

Mentioned by 10 people (13%)

“Great to have actors playing the roles to show how
language and body language can improve team working.”

“The rawness of what is happening on the ground
filtered through performance to create space for
reflection.”

**Strength & novelty of
Performing Medicine
approach:**

Mentioned by 10 people (13%)

“Amazing what can be achieved in a short time”

“Quick, practical, easy to follow and change.”

“It showed a different way of taking inappropriate
behaviour seriously.”

Finally, participants outlined the impacts the session had on themselves:

**Empowerment of
participants:**

Mentioned by 12 people (16%)

“Helping us to speak up when we don’t feel comfortable”

“Valuable because non-threatening; it didn’t put people
on the spot.”

**Lasting reflection on
behaviour change:**

Mentioned by 11 people (14%)

“A great way to learn and reflect on practice.”

“A safe space for reflection, a glimpse into different
perspectives; everyone has something to learn.”

“People were talking about it for days afterwards it
was powerful.”

Future of the programme

The forum worked well, and the only significant changes suggested were about the positioning of the event in the audit programme and the need to ensure that the main scenario is not interpreted as negatively reflecting on any particular theatre role or speciality.

There is clearly scope for more work of this kind. One of the key informants estimated that around a thousand surgical, nursing and other theatre staff could benefit from similar events. Related suggestions were that this work should be embedded in the continuing training for teams in theatres, and that other areas of clinical practice could benefit equally from an intervention of this kind.