Developing a Strategy for a Research Active Hospice: Process and Progress

Christina Radcliffe¹  
Alistair Hewison²  
Deborah Talbot¹

1. Birmingham St Mary’s Hospice  
2. University of Birmingham

Strategy

A strategy was developed to drive forward research as a central part of business and to achieve the aim of becoming a level 3 research active hospice. This encompassed short, medium and long term actions to provide a plan of activity focussed on achieving these outcomes. Key performance indicators were agreed and progress in the areas identified for action is reported to the board. The figure below summarises some of the goals:

- Scoping of existing research capabilities  
- Establishing regular research meetings  
- Provision of workshops on research and scholarship  
- Work with the marketing team to design a template for poster presentation

Short term

- Integrate research activity and staffing into business planning cycle  
- Increase research engagement amongst staff, patients, volunteers and carers  
- Strengthen links with local university  
- Establish web presence and social media profile

Medium term

- Submit a credible bid for external funding with hospice staff on the team  
- Review progress with a view to generating plans for longer term funding and staffing

Long term

Introduction

It is important that hospices are involved in research in order to provide evidence based treatment and care, to test and improve complex interventions, and to understand the changing needs of the community they serve (Payne et al. 2013). A framework has been developed which identifies the levels of research activity hospices can engage in (Figure 1) and provides guidance on how this can be achieved (Payne and Turner 2012). This was used to design and deliver a research strategy at Birmingham St Mary’s Hospice.

Background/Context

Birmingham St Mary’s Hospice recognised that an active programme of scholarship and research was necessary if its values were to be realised. Together with clear drivers for research in palliative care both nationally and locally, research was identified as a key priority for the hospice.

Key benefits

- Research is now a standing agenda item for board meetings indicating it is central to hospice business  
- Increased interest and engagement amongst staff  
- Ability to offer patients and carers involvement in research projects  
- Positive feedback from patients and carers concerning involvement in research  
- Focal point for advice and guidance on postgraduate studies and other research

References

Payne S., Prestwich J., Turner M and Nolte L. (2012) Research in palliative care: can hospices afford not to be involved? Research in palliative care both nationally and locally, research was identified as a key priority for the hospice.

Conclusion

There has been considerable progress in the nine months since the strategy was endorsed by the Hospice Board. It has been used to guide activity and a number of the short and medium term objectives have already been achieved. Work to date has established a firm foundation for the hospice to achieve its aspiration to become a level three research hospice by 2018.