

Macmillan briefing on cancer patient experience



Briefing for: MPs and peers

Purpose: To provide a briefing on treating cancer patients with dignity and respect and supporting staff to deliver this

Contact: Alexandra Cardenas, Senior Public Affairs Officer,
020 7840 4796 acardenas@macmillan.org.uk

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1. Introduction

Macmillan Cancer Support strongly believes that all cancer patients should have a positive experience of care and be treated with the highest levels of dignity and respect throughout their journey. However, the public inquiry report into the failings of care at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust told a story of appalling suffering for many patients. To address the primary cause of these problems, the Francis Inquiry recommended developing a common culture where patients are the priority in all the NHS does, and staff are caring, compassionate and committed. It also added emphasised the need to support frontline staff in doing so.

Ahead of the General Election, Macmillan is calling on all parties to ensure:

- All cancer patients are treated with the highest levels of dignity and respect
- NHS staff are supported to deliver this ambition.

2. Putting patients at the heart of the NHS

The National Cancer Patient Experience Survey (CPES), run by NHS England, provides valuable information on which hospital trusts' cancer patients are receiving a positive experience of care, and where further progress is required. The CPES gives cancer patients a meaningful voice and is a vital tool for holding the NHS bodies to account.

However, for many people, experiences of cancer care are not positive. The results of the 2013 CPES showed that urgent improvements are needed in care planning, provision of information, coordinated care, financial support and relational care. Furthermore, there is stark variation in patient experience across the country and inequalities in relation to age, gender and ethnicity.ⁱ

Valerie, living with cancer, South East: *'When I was told I would need radiotherapy, I thought, "when will I get back to work? How long will it take?" When I asked, nobody was very specific. They said, "Well some people work while they're having their radiotherapy." I couldn't do that because I had to travel for radiotherapy and it was a whole day gone from start to finish.'*

Macmillan's research shows that across the NHS patient experience is still not regarded as having equal importance as clinical effectiveness and patient safety. Experts we spoke to told us that this is because patient experience is not meaningfully prioritised at all levels of the system. For example, when hospital boards raised patient experience as an agenda item, only 5% of these items had further action attached to them. Without hospital boards leading the way and emphasising the importance of patient experience, frontline staff are less likely to see it as a priority.

To ensure patients are treated with the highest levels of dignity and respect, Macmillan is calling on the next Government to:

- Publish a national benchmark of performance on cancer patient experience in hospitals trusts.
- Require all hospital trusts to publish action plans to address weaknesses on cancer patient experience and report on progress towards implementation
- Ensure commissioners hold hospital trusts to account on the delivery of plans to improve cancer patient experience.

3. Supporting NHS staff to deliver the best experience of care

A letter from the Cancer Voices Network to Jeremy Hunt: *'The Francis Report showed that things can go wrong at all levels of NHS organisations. The right tone at leadership level is key to promoting positive cultural change and ensuring junior professionals do not become disillusioned by a culture which only rewards cure, not care.'*

Since the publication of the Francis inquiry report, the Government has stated that well-treated staff treat patients well and that staff wellbeing is the foundation on which compassionate care must be built. Yet, the 2013 NHS Staff Survey shows that a significant proportion of staff are having a poor experience. For example, only 58% of staff would recommend their organisation as a place to work.

Macmillan's research on this issue also shows that the treatment of hospital staff is intrinsically linked to patient experience. Happy staff means happy patients. Conversely, where staff suffer high levels of discrimination or harassment, cancer patients are up to 18 times more likely to receive poor care.ⁱⁱ

Mark, a senior nurse from Hertfordshire said: *'I've always loved coming into work. I love my job. I love that every day that I come into work, even though I'm doing the same job of administering chemotherapy, it's different patients we're treating every day. They're all different – we treat them all as individuals.'*

As a first step to address this, there must be national leadership for improving staff experience and a strong recognition at the highest level that the evidence clearly supports the link between patient and staff experience. In addition, all employers must be meaningfully measured on the experience of their staff and held to account for improving it. Furthermore, all staff – both clinical and non-clinical – should have the time and support to access regular development opportunities on providing a good experience and to reflect on the emotional impact of caring.

As well as incentivising change through frameworks and measures, it is equally important to rollout solutions that work on the ground and share best practice. Macmillan has a number of measures to improve patient and staff experience including:

- **Macmillan Values Based Standard®:** eight practical behaviours designed to improve the relationship between staff and patients to be implemented across the NHS.
- **Schwartz Center Rounds®:** regular sessions which provide professionals from all disciplines the opportunity to discuss challenging instances of patient care.

To ensure NHS staff are supported to treat cancer patients with the highest levels of dignity and respect, Macmillan is calling on the next Government to:

- Ensure there is national leadership and responsibility for improving staff experience. This should include communicating a strong national message about the links between staff and patient experience and including a clear emphasis on improving staff experience in the NHS Mandate.
- Hold health bodies to account for improving staff experience by including an indicator on staff experience (which focuses on support, empowerment, engagement, meaningful appraisals and health and wellbeing) in the NHS Outcomes Framework.
- Ensure the Care Quality Commission and commissioners measure and hold to account trusts on their performance on patient and staff experience. This should include their implementation of practical solutions to improve the experiences of patients and staff, such as the Macmillan Values Based Standard®.
- Work with Health Education England to ensure staff have access to and are released to attend ongoing development opportunities that will improve their ability to provide care with dignity and respect. HEE must also prioritise CPD (continuing professional development) for medical and non-medical staff in how its budget is allocated.

4. How can MPs and peers support improvements in cancer patient experience?

We would be extremely grateful if you could:

- Write to the leadership of your party responsible for policy development raising Macmillan's calls ahead of the General Election.
- Ask Parliamentary questions on the issues mentioned in this briefing. Naturally, we can offer suggested wording.

For more information: Alexandra Cardenas, Senior Public Affairs Officer,
ACardenas@macmillan.org.uk, 020 7840 4796, www.macmillan.org.uk/parliament

ⁱ All figures are from the National Cancer Patient Experience Survey. NHS England. Cancer Patient Experience Survey 2013 National Report. 2013. Listed above are evaluative questions where the national average showed 60% or less scored positively. <http://www.quality-health.co.uk/resources/surveys/national-cancer-experience-survey/2013-national-cancer-patient-experience-survey/2013-national-cancer-patient-experience-survey-reports/301-2013-national-cancer-patient-experience-survey-programme-national-report/file>

ⁱⁱ The relationship between cancer patient experience and staff survey results, Picker Institute Europe (30 July 2013). Picker Institute Europe was commissioned by Macmillan Cancer Support to investigate the relationship between the results for the Cancer Patient Experience Survey (CPES) and the NHS Staff Survey. The data were from the 2011 CPES and the 2011 NHS Staff Survey. See [here](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Documents/AboutUs/Research/Researchandevaluationreports/ReportCPES-StaffexperienceP2709v4.pdf) for the full report. <http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Documents/AboutUs/Research/Researchandevaluationreports/ReportCPES-StaffexperienceP2709v4.pdf>