Understanding the link between patient and staff experiences

H McConnell, A Choudaki
Macmillan Cancer Support

Background
Every cancer patient deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. While most cancer patients receive good, compassionate care, there are many that do not. Emerging literature shows links between positive staff experience and positive patient experience. Yet, the NHS Staff Survey shows that only 47% received training on how to deliver a good patient service user experience in the last 12 months.

Macmillan Cancer Support funded analysis showed that in trusts where staff experience high levels of discrimination, cancer patients were up to 18 times more likely to receive poor care. Other research has shown links of management style and patient experience, and the impact of work-related stress on staff. This research aims to explore the relationship between staff and patient experience with a view to understand a) the barriers clinical and non-clinical staff have in delivering a positive patient experience and b) what factors contribute to poor staff experience.

Method
Macmillan commissioned DHP Research to conduct 20 semi-structured interviews with NHS staff at two hospitals in England. Previously, six cancer patients were interviewed in order to develop vignettes that were used as probes in the staff interviews. Purposive sampling was used to select the interviewees in order to obtain a spectrum of experiences from clinical and non-clinical staff. The staff included receptionists, a healthcare assistant, nurses, an occupational therapist, a radiographer, a specialist consultant doctors and a general manager. A framework analysis method was used to classify textual data in order to identify emerging core themes.

Results
The qualitative analysis highlighted barriers under seven broad themes that hindered the delivery of quality care for cancer patients. The themes were: Training and development, Staff empowerment, Work-related stress and wellbeing, Leadership and management, Teamwork and communication, Organisational policy and IT and Workload, staffing and time with patients.

Barriers:
- Lack of funding and not being able to release staff to take time off.
- Lack of training may lead to staff feeling disengaged, and a lack of confidence in undertaking some tasks.

Leadership And Management
Good leadership, planning, recruitment and performance management are important factors relating to staff experience. Recognition and reward is very important for staff to feel valued.

Teamwork And Communication
Teamwork and communication include (1) effective staff communication resulting in good co-ordinated care. It occurs via patient notes, formal and informal team meetings; (2) Team support with workload and emotional pressure; (3) Team working across disciplines. Good relationships with staff across different roles and understanding each other’s constraints.

Workload, Staffing And Time With Patients
Making sure responsibilities are shared and time is fully support patients and ensuring adequate staff are in place. Clinical staff also acknowledged allowing time to address quality of consultation along with meeting targets.

Barriers:
- Staff requesting support from others beyond their normal role.
- Insufficient staff can reduce staff ability to do their job effectively.
- Lengthy recruitment process may put people off from applying.
- Poor scope for professional development leads to poor staff retention.

Conclusions
Patients are more than their conditions and staff are more than their uniforms. Effective communication is essential, not just between clinicians and patients but amongst all staff, who should work as a team to provide the best possible care, regardless of their position within the NHS. Perhaps the most intuitive link on staff and patient experience is whether staff would recommend their Trust as a place to work or receive treatment. The narratives highlight that staff recognise that quality of care is not solely measured by clinical outcomes. While solutions may be hard to implement, cultural change and practical steps can be successfully adopted. Macmillan’s report on ‘The people behind Cancer Care’ provides an outline of how management and staff can be supported so that they can provide the best possible care to all cancer patients.

Acknowledgments
Macmillan Cancer Support would like to thank all cancer patients and NHS Staff who took part in the interviews.

References
1 Review of Staff Engagement and Empowerment in the NHS. Improving NHS Care by Engaging Staff and Devolving Decision-Making. July 2014
2 NHS Staff Survey 2014. Picker Institute Europe. Available at http://www.c鞒hcare.co.uk/Pages/1066/Latest-Results/2014-Results/Released-March-2015
6 Macmillan Cancer Support’s 2013, The People behind Cancer Care: Patient and Staff Stories. June 2013

For more information: macmillan@macmillan.org.uk