



## **Eryl Evans**

[Head and neck cancer](#) is unique in that both the disease and its treatment can have devastating effects on speech and swallowing, which impact on quality of life. Eryl has demonstrated an unstinting enthusiasm and commitment to developing Speech and Language Therapy for head and neck cancer patients, and has focused on the challenges of delivering high quality services.

With a strong emphasis on evidence-based practice and patient centered approaches, she has recognised gaps in services and developed innovative service delivery models.

### **Key achievements**

- In 2007 she secured funding for the first Macmillan Speech and Language Therapist post in Wales, to work with radiotherapy patients
- Recognising the inequity of service provision to those living in rural areas she developed a telerehabilitation study, utilising videoconferencing equipment to provide remote therapy and support for patients from West Wales.
- This groundbreaking work has been replicated and presented nationally and internationally
- As a result of this work, she secured £250,000 funding for 2 further Macmillan speech and language therapy posts to implement this model of service delivery
- She is a recognised expert in her field within and outside her profession, and has been instrumental in promoting this way of working.

### **Cancer rehabilitation strategy**

Before retiring, Eryl was involved in the Cancer Rehabilitation Strategy for this area. Eryl ensured all service developments have been supported by the South Wales Cancer Network and the two health boards involved as well as the head and neck cancer Multidisciplinary Teams.

These service developments will ensure access to high quality specialist therapy regardless of location.

Patients and their families travel long distances to the cancer centre. The equipment purchased by Macmillan can also provide a means of communication during any hospital stay reducing the need for long journeys, as well as providing specialist training at a distance for staff.

Eryl's groundbreaking work, utilising new technology, looking for different ways of working, dogged determination, and an unrelenting concern for equity of care, has contributed to addressing inequity of service provision. Developing and evaluating a remote model of service delivery, quantifying the cost and quality benefits of doing so, identifying gaps in service and secured £250,000 funding to

establish and develop the speech and language therapy service for head and neck oncology patients in South West Wales, regardless of where they live.

### **Lessons learned**

Commitment, time and a strong evidence base is required to address challenges in an innovative way. Finding out what is out there and trying to work out whether it could be adapted, adopted or utilised. Not giving up, and 'just doing it' – change can and does happen, sometimes after the first small step. Long term commitment and investment can only occur with strong, documented service evaluation, this is essential for implementing change and securing resources.

If you have any questions about Eryl's case study please email Macmillan development manager Kim Morris [KMorris@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:KMorris@macmillan.org.uk)