

NHS Grampian Spiritual Care Committee

Report on the work of Healthcare Chaplains in NHS Grampian February 2010

Much of the work of hospital chaplains happens quietly and unobserved at the bedside, in the day rooms and corridors, over a cup of tea in the staff dining room, in a whole variety of places, when spiritual and religious support is given to patients, families, carers, and healthcare staff. To help quantify and report this work, all whole-time chaplains in Scotland were asked to record their activity for one week in November. The report from the Aberdeen team has now been sent off to the Healthcare Chaplaincy Programme Director, Rev Ewen Kelly and a report will be produced on the Scottish picture for presentation to the Scottish Government Health Department. The Aberdeen report contains a great deal of details about the kind of encounters which happen between chaplains and those they support. They reported that they had 463 significant encounters during the week when spiritual care was delivered. Here is just one of the many examples reported of the care given by chaplains:

I was called to a ward to visit an elderly male patient from the northern isles. This was his first admission to hospital. He was aware of his diagnosis of cancer but was quite calm and resigned. His daughter was present in the single room but left to allow her father to express his feeling to the chaplain – not easy for an islander. We spoke about what the future held and his positive relationship with his own minister. He underwent tests and was discharged back to the island.

Much of the work of the chaplains does not change from year to year: patients visited, services conducted, families supported, the concerns of staff listened to. This report focuses on some of the more unusual activities of the year.

Sessional Chaplains

There are 23 sessional chaplain posts in NHS Grampian. These chaplains serve in the community hospitals outwith Aberdeen, at the Oaks Day Unit in Elgin and at Dr Gray's Hospital. Historically, the Church of Scotland has made these appointments. As the final part of the process of bringing all chaplaincy staff into NHS Grampian employment and creating the Grampian wide chaplaincy team, work has started to prepare job descriptions, assess the level of chaplaincy cover which should be provided and to explain to the chaplains in post the implications of the change and to offer them NHS Grampian contracts. It is anticipated that there will be little change in personnel: two of the existing chaplains have resigned, two have moved from the area and two are about to retire. It is anticipated that the change will take place on 1 April 2010 and that there will be 17 chaplains providing the spiritual and religious care in the areas concerned.

Spiritual Care Matters

An Introductory Resource for all NHS Scotland Staff entitled, *Spiritual Care Matters* was published by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) in February 2009. It is hoped that this resource will better integrate spiritual care within all healthcare practice and be a useful training resource. The chaplaincy team

was successful in their bid for a grant from NES to promote the document in NHS Grampian. Rev Alison Hutchison has assumed lead role in organising the project, preparing posters and other promotional material using the colourful cartoons published in the book. The results of the Grampian project and those from other parts of Scotland will be presented at a national conference in Perth in Spring 2010.

Already chaplains are responding to requests from a variety of teams to attend meetings to talk about the book and how spiritual care matters in the whole of healthcare. In Mental Health, Adult, Specialism and Old Age ward manager meetings welcomed an interactive workshop with a clear focus on spiritual needs being part of the holistic approach to patient care. Community Psychiatric Nurses listened and responded to the information given and extended an invitation to a personal development day to further explore areas of commonality. Aberdeen city mental health social work team included a visit to Cornhill's chaplaincy department on their retreat day and were introduced to Spiritual Care Matters. Rev Muriel Knox (mental health chaplain) who has been involved in the training of staff in the 10 Essential Shared Capabilities and the Recovery Model of care reports how well that process fits with Spiritual Care Matters and the opportunities which have developed for chaplaincy as a result. Other meetings in different locations and departments are planned or anticipated in the first few months of 2010.

Major Incident Plan

Chaplains were called out twice in the early part of 2009 when the hospital put the major incident plan into operation. The rolling out of the plan is not a common occurrence. Since the Piper Alpha tragedy in 1988, chaplains have been involved only twice, once after the Brent Spar helicopter crash and then at the millennium when no one was sure what would happen because of the computer problems anticipated as 2000 dawned. Now in a very short time two separate helicopter crashes put the hospital on alert to receive casualties. In both cases, in the end, there was no significant hospital involvement. However the chaplains proved that their part of the plan worked well and the experience will stand them in good stead for the next incident whenever it may happen. It also shows the value of the regular visits made by oil company staff to the chapel as part of their involvement in emergency response training when chaplains explain their role and the place of the hospital chapel in the hospital emergency plan. The plan designates the ARI chapel as the place where relatives and friends of casualties will wait. Chaplains will be there with these waiting relatives and friends, as well as offering support to casualties and hospital staff involved in the incident.

Chaplaincy Volunteers

The Aberdeen chaplains have been very grateful over the years for the splendid work done by the team of chaplaincy volunteers who visit wards and befriend patients. Inevitably, with time, numbers of volunteers reduce. A new group of 10 volunteers undertook a 6 week training course in the spring, led by chaplain Mark Rodgers and are now all settling in to their regular ward visiting.

In addition to the ward visitors, there is also a large group of wheelchair escorts who bring patients to the Sunday services organised by the chaplains

at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Royal Cornhill Hospital and at Woodened Hospital. A number of volunteers also do the calligraphy involved in preparing the pages for the memorial Books in use at the Maternity Hospital and the Children's Hospital.

As a small way of saying thank you, NHS Grampian organised two afternoon receptions for just some of the volunteers, including the chaplaincy volunteers, who give unstintingly of their time.

Service of Blessing of Hands

Sylvia Spencer (chaplain at Roxburghe House) conducted a dedication service for volunteers at Roxburghe House. The idea came from the volunteers themselves when she addressed a group meeting recently. The service of "Blessing of Hands" was attended by 18 of the volunteers and a further service followed on a Sunday afternoon for volunteers who were unable to attend the first service which was held on a Friday afternoon.

Annual Study Day

Assistant chaplains, John Duthie, Donald Meston and Trudy Noble organised another very successful Chaplaincy Study Day in November. Chaplains, chaplaincy volunteers, ministers, priests and those involved in pastoral care in hospitals from churches and faith groups, came together to hear talks from staff and patients on the theme: *"Is this really me?"- the authentic self in the time of crisis or illness.* The day was very well evaluated, not least the inspirational keynote address from Bishop Bob Gillies of the Scottish Episcopal Church who spoke about the spiritual dimension – "Made in Whose image? Restore in us Your image."

Singing for the Brain

He withdrew himself and stopped communicating with his wife...she said "Singing for the Brain" had unlocked his communication block.

BBC News Health Reporter

Following a BBC broadcast in November, interest has been growing in setting up a group entitled, "Singing for the Brain". Members of the Alzheimer's Society in the south west of England have shared their experience in involving people with dementia and family members meeting twice a month with a skilled facilitator to sing together.

Research has shown that the part of the brain controlling music and song is not affected by the progress of Alzheimer's disease. Mental health chaplains have been actively engaged in using these skills in the four day hospitals connected with Royal Cornhill Hospital. This growing interest is an opportunity to roll out into the community a possible project that might enable social and spiritual needs to be met while supporting those who have to deal with the consequences of living with dementia. An initial meeting of all interested parties will take place in March 2010, including NHS occupational therapy and the city council.

Keeping in touch with Faith Group Leaders

As part of our policy of keeping in touch, we have recently written to ministers, priests and faith group leaders in Grampian to let them know about changes in the way we inform them that patients would like a visit. The phone calls

which our secretaries are now making give the information much more quickly and are much appreciated. The cost to the hospital is also considerably less than the postal charges which were incurred before. This new system was prompted by the need to find a way to let faith group leaders in Moray know that patients had been admitted to Dr Gray's Hospital there.

At the same time we have drawn attention to the need for attention to hand hygiene and infection control issues and to avoid meal times when visiting. There had been a couple of occasions when ministers were refused access to wards at protected meal times.

Faith and the Cancer Journey

Rev Alison Hutchison and Rev Sylvia Spencer (chaplains at Roxburghe House) led workshops on "faith and the cancer journey" during a national conference for carers and support workers hosted by CLAN in Aberdeen. The 100 or so participants of the conference from different parts of Scotland and Ireland greatly appreciated the input from our chaplains.

People with Dementia

Rev Jim Simpson, mental health chaplain, was invited by Health Scotland to attend a day consolation about the production of a DVD based on the book, *Coping with Dementia*. This will be a tool for those diagnosed with dementia and their families which will allow the viewer to dip into the relevant subject from a catalogue of practical information. The finished product which should be available by the end of March 2010. It will address spiritual needs along with physical and psychological issues.

Pamela Adam, assistant chaplain in mental health, continues to organise religious services for people with dementia and their carers. Recently a change of focus has seen "café" style services led by the chaplains in Bridge of Don Baptist Church.

Hospitals at Night

Donald Meston, assistant chaplain, has undertaken a pilot late shift in to try to make contact with groups of staff working at Royal Cornhill Hospital in the late evening and at night. Once an evaluation has taken place, this scheme may be extended. At the same time chaplains are involved in a working group looking at improving safety for staff working in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary at night. Chaplains may find themselves called out to support patients and relatives during the night hours.

Woodend Hospital

Woodend hospital is in a time of transition, with changes anticipated over the next few years. The Spiritual Care Committee met there in May and heard about how the chaplains, Rev Mark Rodgers and Rev John Duthie were planning for the changes. One immediate change has been to start an extra service during the week for the long term patients once cared for in Westview, who have now moved to the new Morningfield House which is in a separate building. This prevents them from attending either of the two other services held at Woodend.

Caring for Roman Catholic Patients

Catholic patients are cared for by a variety of people. Fr George Hutcheon is chaplain at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and Royal Cornhill Hospital. Deacon Peter Macdonald's responsibility is for the children and families at the Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital and Aberdeen Maternity Hospital. Fr Patrick Rice, supported by Margaret Coll looks after the Catholic patients at Woodend, while Deacon Vincent McQuaid has lead role in caring for the Catholic families at Dr Gray's Hospital in Elgin. Trudy Noble is an assistant chaplain at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary but also takes lead role in organising regular visiting of Catholic patients there and arranging for sacramental ministers to bring communion to patients each Sunday. Emergency calls in the evenings and at night are answered by a rota of priests from the Aberdeen Churches. The Aberdeen catholic chaplains have recently been invited to attend the regular whole-time chaplaincy team meetings.

Bereavement Care

Chaplains continue to work in the area of bereavement care, both directly with families and in a variety of working and support groups. This year an audit has been carried out by Rev Alison Hutchison to ascertain the views of staff about the information given to families when a patient dies. Funded by a small grant from the Robert Gordon University, Alison has worked with Dr Peter Wimpenny of RGU. The results of the audit will inform the rewriting of the booklet for relatives which the NHS Grampian Caring for the Dying and Bereaved Group are planning in association with the inter-agency GBRIG group (Grampian Bereavement Resource and Interest Group).

Memorial and thanksgiving Services continue to be well supported. The Annual Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving, organised by the chaplains in Queen's Cross Church each September for those who have died in hospital and Roxburghe House, continues to grow in popularity. Part of the service is now aimed at children and those attending are asked to write out names of those who have died to allow them to be read out during the service.

Memorials at Hazlehead

Many stillborn babies are buried in special ground set aside for this purpose at Hazlehead cemetery, now that the similar ground at Trinity Cemetery is full. The local SANDS Group (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death) has commissioned a memorial for these babies, which will be a central feature of this area. Some funding was made available last year from Health Board sources .

A small memorial was erected and dedicated this year at Hazlehead Crematorium in response to requests from parents for a place where they might visit and place flowers in memory of their babies cremated there, .

Roxburghe House Memorial Book

Rev Sylvia Spencer, chaplain at Roxburgh House has taken lead role in re-introducing the memorial book for those who have died at Roxburghe House. She is making contact with families and has organised the printing of the pages of the book which will be available in the Chapel at Roxburghe. This is part of the commitment to enhanced care for the bereaved.

Grampian Child Bereavement Network

James Falconer, chaplain at Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital, in a joint project with other professionals working in Health Visiting, Social Work, Educational Psychology and the Aberdeen Mental Health Association, was delighted that the 'Grampian Child Bereavement Network' was granted Charitable Status in 2009.

The Trustees continue to meet and work on mapping out the Values and Principles of the Network, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. These may include the need to: 'Acknowledge the child or young person's grief and experience of loss as a result of death'; 'Respect the child's family and immediate social situation and their cultural, language, beliefs and religious background'; 'Aim wherever possible, appropriate and feasible to involve family members, other caregivers and any professionals working with the child in a wider social context'.

Other work includes establishing best practice on matters including child protection, confidentiality policy and data protection and safe recruitment of staff and volunteers.

Postgraduate Certificate in Healthcare Chaplaincy

Rev Mark Rodgers, chaplain at Woodend Hospital and Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, is currently one of the first group to undertake the new postgraduate certificate course in healthcare chaplaincy commissioned by NHS Education for Scotland and provided by the University of Glasgow. The course is mostly distance learning with a few contact days in Glasgow. This will be the main qualification in the future for healthcare chaplaincy in Scotland. Rev Fred Coutts, Head of Spiritual Care has been asked to be his mentor in preparing his final portfolio of work.

Supporting One Another

The Aberdeen whole-chaplains invited Michael Patterson (now chaplain at St Columba's Hospice in Edinburgh) to spend a day with them looking at how they supported one another. It was a relaxed day spend in Roxburghe House, studying, talking, listening and worshipping. The general feeling was that this was an excellent day and of great benefit to the team, both individually and collectively. One result has been the decision to continue to meet in small groups every month for mutual support and reflection.

Fred Coutts

Head of Spiritual Care

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