

Pause for Thought

A spiritual resource for patients, families, visitors and staff

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Background

Spirituality is seen as a central element of Palliative Care^{1,2}, however barriers exist which prevent the identification and addressing of the spiritual needs of patients and families living with a life threatening illness^{3,4}. Equally there is a challenge to professional caregivers to attend to their own unique spirituality, when offering spiritual interventions to others⁵. In order to support staff in a specialist palliative care unit, a practice development initiative was undertaken resulting in a resource called *Pause for Thought*.



Aim of *Pause for Thought*

Pause for Thought is intended to offer patients, families, visitors and staff comfort, inspiration and an opportunity for reflection.

Process of development

A multiprofessional working party was formed, including nursing staff, a chaplain, a practice development facilitator and a librarian.

Ideas for *Pause for Thought* were generated through discussion resulting in the compilation of poems, stories, quotations, humorous anecdotes, photographs and sketches. Sacred stories, proverbs and rituals can support people in preparing for dying⁶.

The design of *Pause for Thought* is flexible so that items can be added/removed making it personal to the individual patient.

Pause for Thought was launched with a gathering open to all Hospice employees and short extracts were read by a variety of Hospice staff.

Pause for Thought is available at each bedside in the inpatient unit, in the sanctuary and in day services.

Content

Many publishers were supportive of the idea and delighted for their pieces to be included.

During its creation many staff contributed by making suggestions, through their enthusiasm, by writing pieces, giving photographs or their time in reviewing the content.

The Scottish author Alexander McCall Smith wrote a short story using the central character from *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*⁷ entitled: *On remembering things and people*.

A local artist brought many of the stories to life through illustrations. Contributions were carefully chosen for a quotation page, including:

"Never fear shadows they simply mean there's a light somewhere nearby" Ruth E. Renkel

"Faith is taking the first step when you don't see the whole staircase" Martin Luther King

Evaluation

Each *Pause for Thought* booklet offers an opportunity for evaluation. Comments so far have indicated great value to the individual:

"...Some brought a smile, others made me sad but that was good too, it helped me to reflect on the good things I have been blessed with"

"Wonderfully gathered together... It told me so much about myself. It was like losing myself."

Patients and families have requested our Chaplain to read meaningful extracts at funerals.

Supporting practice

The working party are committed to continued support of the resource through careful consideration of comments and suggestions for future inclusion. Immediate plans are to formally seek staff views by the use of a creative questionnaire.

Conclusion

Good spiritual care can enhance the wellbeing of people living with a life threatening illness^{6,8}. This creative spiritual resource has been shown to be valuable for patients, families and staff within the specialist palliative care setting. Through patient/family feedback and staff evaluation it is anticipated it will continue to evolve in the years ahead.

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