

# Bridging the Gap Between Hospice & Hospital: The Evolution of a Complementary Therapy Service for Palliative Patients in Acute Hospitals Regardless of Diagnosis.



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## Background

The Hospital Palliative Care Team (HPCT) supported 1347 patients in 2016/17. The hospital environment can be especially challenging for these patients and this can impact on both their physical and psychological health. Previously, a few patients unable to leave hospital and in significant distress had benefited from treatments provided by the Complementary Therapists attending from Severn Hospice. To take this further a 6 month project to provide complementary therapy for palliative patients across both hospital sites 1 day per week was funded by Severn Hospice.

## The Service

Complementary therapy was provided by experienced therapists from Severn Hospice. Therapies available included hand and foot massage, reflexology, aromatherapy, reiki and aromatherapy sticks (for nausea, breathlessness or anxiety). New referrals to complementary therapy were accepted from the HPCT. Referrals were also accepted for patients known to Severn Hospice.

The service aimed to bridge the gap between hospital and hospice, provide a more holistic experience and to extend 'hospice-care' to patients in the acute sector

## Results

Between April and September 2016 130 patients (103 in RSH and 27 in PRH) and 5 relatives were treated. The most common diagnosis was cancer, followed by COPD, renal failure and dementia. Therapists provided between 6-9 treatments per day. The response from patients and staff was overwhelmingly positive. The therapists provided continuity of care for patients and strengthened working links between the hospital and the hospice. This has led to an increased number of referrals to outpatient complementary therapy from the acute wards and from community teams. For some patients it has led to a reduction in anxiety surrounding admission to the hospice.



## Challenges

There were several challenges discovered during this project; in particular, ensuring an equitable service across both sites, equipment and environment factors which limited treatments provided, a lack of administration support and a need to define referral criteria to ensure patients were allocated appropriately.

## The Future

Ongoing funding has been secured from Severn Hospice with an aim to expand the service.



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