

Evaluating Project ECHO in palliative and end of life care



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Background

Hospice UK promotes the use of ECHO in order to democratise specialist skills and increase confidence of staff in palliative and end of life care.

Aim: To carry out a formative evaluation of Project ECHO® Isle of Man at the end of its first year of operation and prepare for a summative evaluation at the end of 5 years

Methods

The formative evaluation took place in year 1 of Project ECHO® at Hospice Isle of Man. It informed the format and curriculum of year 2.

This involved:

- ❖ **Routinely collected data:** Number of staff who attended, number of sessions, specialist presentations, cases discussed and staff who attended all sessions.
- ❖ Site visits to the nursing homes. **Interviews** with small groups of staff (21 people in total) explored topics outlined in Box 1. Comments were recorded by two researchers.
- ❖ **End-of-Life Skills Surveys**¹ were distributed to staff. This baseline will be used to demonstrate change in staff skills and confidence (an outcome measure).

¹Whittaker B, et al. BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care 2017

1. **Overall** feedback on sessions
2. Feedback on **materials** provided
3. **Technical** issues
4. Staff **attendance**
5. **Facilitation** of sessions
6. Perceived **change in practice**
7. **Confidence, skills** and feelings of **support**
8. Impact on **workload**
9. Considerations for **future sessions**.

Box 1. Topics discussed with participants

Results

1. **Overall impressions:** Staff found it valuable and were enthused.



2. **Materials provided:** The resources were useful, especially for CPD. Materials provided in advance, such as slides, were helpful.



3. **Technical issues:** Staff became increasingly comfortable with the format and appreciated help from the technical and administrative teams. Participation depended on space availability and staffing issues and the timing of sessions were not always convenient.



"It is the best online, interactive training I have experienced."



4. **Facilitation:** Facilitators helped create a 'safe space' and shared knowledge. Presentations were clear and useful.

Some nursing homes are incorporating Project ECHO® into staff training schedules.

"The nurses seem more open-minded now, more aware of possibilities; they appear to have learned things and are sharing them; they are now more proactive, more confident."

All nursing homes were happy to continue into year 2.

"It was nice to hear that we are not the only people with problems. We all face the same dilemmas."

5. **Change in practice:** Some improvements in practice were already evident.



Skills



Confidence



Discussion



Care



Working together

6. **Confidence, skills and support:** Sessions benefited most participants, even just for revalidation. Staff liked the interactive format and presenters found the experience useful. Some case studies were not explored in-depth and others failed to address the topic.

7. **Workload:** Preparation took time but most staff said it did not impact their workload.

8. **Future sessions:**

- Shorter sessions
- Session materials provided in advance
- Include family members
- Include hospital staff
- Create a notice board to share learning
- A variety of recommendations relating to curriculum

Conclusions

The first Project ECHO® network on the Island was successfully established and conducted by Hospice Isle of Man. The formative evaluation informed improvement and continuation of the network into year 2 with the same group of nursing homes. Changes in practice were noted by participants. Measures used in this evaluation shed light on the short and long-term outcomes of Project ECHO®.