Using Project ECHO to Enable a Range of Palliative Care Education during Covid-19

Dr Anne Kelly, Dr Claire Douglas, Jane Andrew, Susan Kirkham, Lisa McRae
[1] NHS Tayside Specialist Palliative Care Services

Project ECHO (Extension of Community Healthcare Outcomes) uses Zoom technology to enhance education between specialists and non-specialists. A pilot project was established in NHS Tayside Palliative Care services in July 2019. From the onset of Covid-19, adaptation of the project enabled a rapid, early response to demand for education; providing a range of virtual teaching sessions that were well-structured and facilitated. Teaching sessions were adapted to the needs of specific professional groups while staying true to the ECHO principles of participation, interaction and the creation of a supportive learning environment.

Over 700 professionals attended the ECHO-enabled education sessions between April – July 2020 and evaluation was excellent.

This poster is part of the SPPC poster exhibition 2020

anne.kelly1@nhs.scot - 1

Challenge and Approach

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in significant demand for palliative care education but created restrictions on how it could be delivered. Project ECHO[1] is a validated, technology-enabled educational approach used globally to connect networks of learners. NHS Tayside has been piloting its use.

Traditional ECHO Format

- Uses Zoom
- Hub (specialists) and Spoke (non-specialists) model
- Set format: didactic teaching followed by facilitated case discussion
- Series of sessions per group
- Creating communities of practice

ECHO Principles:

- Active participation of all
- Learning from and with each other
- Facilitated discussion and sharing of experience
- ECHO team optimise security/safety and ensure confidentiality and professionalism

For many, use of the traditional ECHO model was not possible during the pandemic. With the permission of Project ECHO, we modified the traditional model and used our ECHO team and license to offer a range of virtual teaching sessions, catering for diverse and specific needs and preferences.

anne.kelly1@nhs.scot - 2

The Range of Sessions: What, Why and for Whom

Type of session	Open invitation stand-alone sessions. Didactic teaching with facilitated Q&A.	Closed-group recurring sessions. Mix of didactic teaching, Q&A and group participation. Held weekly.	Combined education/discussion group. Similar to traditional ECHO format but with focus on ways of working rather than clinical cases. 4 sessions fortnightly.	Focused education sessions. Short series of 3 sessions. Group chose topics. Small group size to encourage discussion.
Target Audience	For Multi-disciplinary Hospital and Community Teams	For Tayside Specialist Palliative Care Team	For Perth and Kinross Community ANP and Specialist Palliative Care Teams	For group of GPs interested in joining the specialist service if required during Covid-19
Objectives	To disseminate key information to large groups eg Covid-19 Palliative Care Guidelines - sharing of information early in the pandemic	To provide a regular forum for interaction and support. To support the learning needs of our own team eg Visiting Policy during Covid-19	To improve collaborative working across teams through discussion and relationship building eg ACP Communication	To support improved knowledge, skills and confidence in specific palliative care issues eg Use of Transdermal Patches in Pain Management

anne.kelly1@nhs.scot - 3

Results and Conclusions

- Sessions reached over 700 participants - many more than attended face-to-face teaching in our region over the same time period
- Modified ECHO formats each had specific attributes and benefits:

Type of session	Open invitation large groups	Closed group weekly sessions	Combined Education/Discussion group	Focused education sessions
Outcome	306 attendees over 5 sessions	Average attendance/session 33	10 participants committed to regular attendance	7 members committed to regular attendance
Key Positives	Open access enabling wide reach in short period of time.	*"Connecting as a group and keeping up to date", "good to be able to request topics and share experience."* 100% satisfied with teaching format and keen to continue	*"Relationship building across teams and having a forum for open, facilitated discussion."* 100% would recommend Project ECHO to others as an educational resource	*"Topics relevant and pitched at the right level", "being able to ask questions", "the non-judgemental environment and approachability of staff…"* 100% participants interested in continuing with ECHO

Virtual education is becoming increasingly prevalent. Project ECHO is a valuable virtual educational resource. We will continue to explore and evaluate its use.

1 Eaton L. Hierarchy disruptors; bringing specialist knowledge from hospital to community care. BMJ (2019) 365: 4376

anne.kelly1@nhs.scot - 4