



SAGE & THYME[®] TRAINING: Can we train renal staff to feel more confident to respond to distressed patients?

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Introduction:

Psychological distress is common amongst patients, their families and their carers. Effective communication is widely regarded as being a key factor in determining a patient's satisfaction, compliance with treatment and recovery¹. Insufficient training in communication is a major factor contributing to stress, lack of job satisfaction and emotional burnout in healthcare professionals^{2,3}. Communication skills training has been identified as an area for staff development and we identified this particular training as specifically useful for renal staff.

Aims:

To explore the impact of attending the SAGE & THYME[®] foundation level workshop on improving the confidence of renal staff to deal with distressed renal patients.

Design:

Pre and post training measures assessed the confidence of renal staff to respond to distressed renal patients and their families. The questionnaire measures 16 separate communication skills e.g. *Use empathic supportive comments with patients (not sympathy); Have a structure for a concerns based interaction with a patient.* Post-training, staff rated the usefulness of the training and their intention to use the model in practice.



Setting:	If you notice concern – create some privacy – sit down
Ask:	“Can I ask what you are concerned about?”
Gather:	Gather all of the concerns – not just the first few
Empathy:	Respond sensitively – “you have a lot on your mind”
&	
Talk:	“Who do you have to talk to or to help you?”
Help:	“How do they help?”
You:	“What do YOU think would help?”
Me:	“Is there something you would like ME to do?”
End:	“Summarise and close – “Can we leave it there?”

What is the SAGE & THYME[®] model?

SAGE & THYME[®] is a mnemonic which provides a structure for healthcare professionals to use when communicating with patients and carers who are distressed or have concerns. The model was initially developed by University Hospitals of South Manchester (UHSM) and has been rolled out to other trusts using a train the trainer approach. The workshop is evidence based and includes discussions, group work, rehearsals and lectures. The workshop lasts for 3 hours and requires 3 facilitators to teach the model. The training is open to all members of renal staff. The SAGE & THYME[®] model empowers patients to voice their concerns, identify and raise awareness of their support networks and then leads to the patient to thinking of their own solutions about what would help them prior to any input or advice from the healthcare professional⁴.

Results:

115 renal staff participated in the training across a six month period. The response rate to the pre and post training confidence questionnaires was 87%.

Participants rated higher confidence levels in all 16 skills following the course. T tests were used to compare pre and post scores. As 16 comparisons were made, we applied a Bonferroni correction to control for type 1 error. The revised p value was $p < 0.003$ and all comparisons were found to be highly significant $p < 0.001$.

Following the training, staff were highly motivated to use the SAGE & THYME[®] model. Their motivation to use the whole model was high (scale 1-10) (mean 8.74) and their motivation to use elements of the model was also high (mean 9.15).

Staff rated how useful they felt the model will be in enabling patients (mean 9.58) and for them personally in their work with patients (mean 8.94). Their intention to use the model was also high (mean 8.97).

References:

- ¹Stewart, M. A. (1996). Effective physician-patient communication and health outcomes: a review. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*; 152: 1423-33.
- ²Fallowfield, L, Jenkins, V (1999). Effective Communication Skills are the key to good cancer care. *European Journal of Cancer*; 35 (11): 1592 – 1597.
- ³Taylor, C, Graham, J, Potts, H, Richards, M, Ramirez, A. (2005). Changes in mental health of UK hospital consultants since the mid-1990's. *Lancet*; 366 (9487): 742-744
- ⁴Connolly, M, Perryman, J, McKenna, Y, Orford, J, Thomson, L, Shuttleworth, J & Cocksedge, S. (2010). SAGE&THYME: A model for training health and social care professionals in patient-focused support. *Patient Education and Counseling*; 79: 87-93.

Conclusion:

The SAGE & THYME[®] foundation level workshop, using a train the trainer approach can be successfully delivered to renal staff. Staff have responded positively to the training and the results showed that the training significantly improved their confidence to respond to renal patients presenting in distress. The unit is intending to roll the training out to the remaining renal staff and follow up the longer term impact of the training.