

The impact of face-to-face social work meetings in bleeding disorder care

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Psychosocial Issues

Abstract

Objective: Specialized knowledge is required to assess, treat and to support patients with bleeding disorders and their families. Social workers working in this unique clinical area, often do so in isolation with a lack of onsite discipline-specific mentorship. National meetings which provide face-to-face contact with other social workers counters this and provides imperative opportunity for collaboration and education. This promotes significant learning and professional growth; enhancing patient care. Conversely, securing funding for our meetings is becoming increasingly difficult, therefore, tangible and stated benefits need to be voiced. **Method:** Ten CSWHC members attended their annual general meeting in May 2019. Canadian Social Workers in Hemophilia Care (CSWHC) are registered with provincial regulatory bodies and are integral members of the comprehensive care team within Hemophilia Treatment Centres (HTC). The social work role focuses upon psychosocial assessment and treatment with the goal of optimizing Quality of Life (QoL). These social workers have worked within bleeding disorders care between 2 weeks to 25 years. Each social worker attending this meeting, shared their personal experience and the impact of attending this face-to-face meeting. **Summary:** Social workers emphasized three main areas of impact from face-to-face meetings: Skills and Knowledge Development Listening to the new language/acronyms expands knowledge base Increased awareness and understanding of bleeding disorders which increases patient support Encourages acquisition and maintenance of practice wisdom Support and Affirmation Gain support from experienced CSWHC social workers Fuels the passion for the work Enhanced connections/relationships Heightened awareness of regional differences and disparity in healthcare Promotion of networking, innovation, engagement and mentorship Affirmation of skills and services provided; support around challenges Program Development Recruitment and retention of committee members Succession planning Collaboration around the development, planned implication and evaluation of patient/family services/programs **Conclusion:** Technology can be seen as a cost effective and reliable replacement for face-to-face meetings and in many ways, it can facilitate the work being completed between meetings. However, research shows the impact that in-person communication has on relationship and program development. Social workers know the necessity of face-to-face interactions for the advancement of social connections given the unique opportunity afforded through this more personal meeting method for the use of non-verbal body language, nuances, efficiency, engagement, development of trust. The CSWHC state that there is a need to maintain face-to-face meetings at a minimum of one time a year. **Acknowledgements:** Stefan Branov, Claude Bartholomew, Patty Phrakonkham-Ali, Hulda Niv, Doug Campbell, Lezley Ireland, Mirelle LeClaire, Natalie Benson