



24.03.16

Going for gold- Improving end of life care

Following this month's British Medical Association (BMA) report and the launch of a new care homes training programme at the Hospice, Tina Swani, Chief Executive at Birmingham St Mary's Hospice writes about how they are 'going for gold' when it comes to end of life care...

Earlier this month, The British Medical Association (BMA) published its third and final report into end of life care in the UK. The key learning point from the report was that end of life care still needs urgent attention, particularly in hospitals. It also recognised that hospices provide the "gold standard" in end of life care.

Coincidentally, on Tuesday 22nd March we delivered our first Gold Standard Framework (GSF) training programme. The GSF launched in 2000 to improve standards of end of life care in all settings. It's now the leading UK provider of training and accreditation for generalist frontline staff in hospitals, primary care and care homes and something we are very proud to be part of.

Birmingham St Mary's Hospice is one of 12 GSF Regional Centres in the UK, currently the only one in Birmingham. Thanks to funding via Health Education West Midlands, we have been able to deliver this programme to a group of 10 care homes from Birmingham and Solihull following requirements identified in the *Birmingham End of Life and Palliative Care Strategy* which was put together by the local Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Here at the Hospice, we are committed to not only develop our staff skill base but to offer support and advice to other professionals and care staff, GPs and District Nurses to provide a better experience at the end of life. One of the challenges discussed in the training programme was initiating conversations about preparing for end of life. We are born and we die but talking about death and dying can still be uncomfortable. A startling fact from the GSF training programme is that 1/3 of the general public have not discussed death and dying with anyone. And according to the BMA report, even doctors need more training to help them handle "difficult conversations" with dying patients and their relatives about the inevitability of death confidently.

This is why national campaigns such as the upcoming Dying Matters Awareness Week (9-15 May) are important opportunities for us to get people talking about and accepting the inevitable (we'll be sharing our programme of events soon). This year's theme is the Big Conversation to encourage discussion around death; everyone will die so let's focus on how to make that experience the best it possibly can be.

Hospices like ours have the experience and expertise in palliative care so it's vital we share this, offering more training to care homes and other generalists benefits us all. We hope GSF training and development of practice based GSF meetings can help to reduce inappropriate hospital admissions and enable more to live and die where they would choose, whether this be a care home, a hospice or their own homes.

Through the GSF care home training programme, we aim to teach generalist frontline staff to deliver a 'gold standard' of care for all people nearing the end of life with confidence. By strengthening collaboration with other healthcare services and partnerships, we can all continue to improve patient care.



Photo caption: Group shot from the GSF preparation Workshop at Birmingham St Mary's Hospice on Tuesday 22nd March 2016



For more information please contact:

Sundip Gill, PR & Digital Officer

Birmingham St Mary's Hospice
176 Raddlebarn Road
Selly Park
Birmingham
B29 7DA

Telephone: 0121 472 1191
E-mail: sundip.gill@birminghamhospice.org.uk
Website: www.birminghamhospice.org.uk

Notes for Editors

- The hospice must be referred to as 'Birmingham St Mary's Hospice or 'Birmingham St Mary's' for short.
- Birmingham St Mary's Hospice is an independent adult hospice providing care to people across Birmingham and Sandwell.
- Caring for around 1,200 people a year, many hospice patients remain at home for much of their illness, where they are supported by our Community Palliative Care and Hospice at Home teams, who work in conjunction with GPs, consultants and other medical professionals.
- The Hospice helps and supports families and loved ones, no matter how young or old, throughout the patient's illness and after bereavement, for as long as necessary.
- People may be admitted to Birmingham St Mary's Hospice's inpatient unit for respite, symptom management or end of life care
- The Harry Moseley Family centre opened in May 2014. The centre enables families to stay at the Hospice to be with a loved one whilst medical and nursing staff manage the symptoms of an illness, assess a patient's readiness to return home, or provide care during their final days.
- There is also a Day Hospice, offering medical support, psycho social and spiritual care, complementary therapies and time off for carers.
- Hospice care is free of charge to all patients and relatives.
- Birmingham St Mary's Hospice currently needs to raise £8 million annually to fund its vital care.