PROJECT REPORT

AFRESH: A STUDY ON FOSTERING EMPATHY BETWEEN STUDENTS AND OLDER PEOPLE - A PRACTICAL APPROACH

Prepared by
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University of Surrey
With Ann Emery
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PROJECT SUMMARY

The aim of this project, led by older people was to explore how empathy and understanding between student nurses and older people can be developed through a collaboration involving the creation of a radio play. We aimed to bring together student nurses and other members of our Older People’s Forum to challenge perceptions of both groups towards each other and to foster positive attitudes of student nurses which in turn could change attitude and practice towards older people in the care setting.

Over a five month period, Ann Emery, of Age UK West Sussex worked closely with University of Surrey researchers to facilitate the activities to meet the aim.

The main outcomes of the project are:

- Strategic planning by project members before each session played an important role in decisions about how best to facilitate communication and openness including intergenerational involvement of all participants;
- Meaningful dialogue worked effectively in small groups which were topic focused within a safe environment in which participants felt able to share;
- Facilitation using experiential techniques enabled an understanding and valuing of each other’s experience and contribution in a comfortable environment;
- Older people felt ‘protective’ of the younger student nurses (e.g. supporting younger participants especially the quieter students);
- The small group experiential activities enabled the development of the ideas and materials for the radio play;
- Older people highly valued the opportunity to be in the university and see how the radio play was developed and recorded at the University studio;
- We compared the baseline and end of project measures using Jefferson Empathy scale and did not find any stark differences; given the small sample size it is therefore not surprising to find that there was no significant impact. However, students reported that their experiences challenged their views about ageing and older people.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the help and support of many people. We are grateful to Penny Robinson and Stephanie Fuller, for the practical support and help in room booking, catering etc. guidance. We were very fortunate to benefit from the wisdom of Professor Helen Allan and Jane Leng who provided us guidance on our Advisory Board. Without the support from our colleagues in the School of Health and Social Care, especially Philomena Mweu who helped us gain access to student participants. Above all, our thanks are extended to participants for giving up their time to attend all the sessions and for sharing their experiences with us.

The play ‘Making Friends’ was written by Ann Emery and the ideas and materials for the play were generated from a project entitled AFRESH (A study on Fostering Empathy between Students and older people - a practical approach). The play was recorded in the television studios at the University of Surrey by Brian Johnson and sound design and editing was performed by Ian Arber, whose help we are most grateful.

The play was performed by members of Age UK West Sussex and by students in the School of Health and Social Care at the University of Surrey.

The project AFRESH was collaboratively designed and managed by Ann Emery (Age UK West Sussex), Khim Horton and Anne Arber (University of Surrey). The project was made possible by a grant from the Averil Osborn Fund.
BACKGROUND

At a meeting earlier in 2012 members of various Senior Forums in West Sussex (approximately 160 older people) supported by Age UK West Sussex, discussed what positive action older people could take to help develop a consistent approach to dignity on the ward, where treatment with respect and consideration was expected as a natural outcome of any hospital stay. During these discussions, members of the forums explored a number of issues that in their experience contributed to lack of dignity on the ward:

- Over 60% of patients using the NHS are aged 65 plus
- Some older people, through illness or disposition, could be very challenging to nurse
- There was a growing geographical distance between families that meant less intergenerational contact
- The loss of intergenerational meeting places/activities such as working men’s clubs,
- The growth of home entertainment systems and new media which could exclude older people.

Members of the forums felt that these issues, together with constant media references to the ‘burden’ of older people, had created a sense of ‘disconnect’ between older and younger generations. Furthermore forum members from recent experience as patients felt that they were not seen as individuals as ‘people’ with a lifetime of experience, with a biography and history, but rather as ‘medical conditions’ in ‘ancient’ or old bodies, ‘not fit for doing anything much’ and who could no longer ‘think for themselves’. They also felt that student nurses may share society’s negative images of older people.

An idea for a radio play was suggested by the Forum members. The radio play ‘Voices round the Teapot’ was based on a piece of work ‘Have you ever wondered what it was like not to be young or middle aged’ conducted by Age UK West Sussex in 2009 and funded by the Equality Commission, for which older people (mostly 75 plus) discussed how they felt about ‘not being young or middle age’. The play, performed in 2010 by older people at two events (but never recorded) was written by Age UK West Sussex. A new radio play based on this early work involving student nurses and older people in a joint project predominantly led by older people themselves was considered to be innovative. It was felt by forum members that developing a new radio play would act as a vehicle to foster intergenerational communication and partnership working. Any support or training required to produce the play would be provided by colleagues from the University of Surrey.

Ann Emery (Age UK West Sussex) met Khim Horton (KH), from the University of Surrey in early July 2011 to discuss the radio play and the possibility of accessing student nurses. Since then, Ann Emery (AE) had chaired a meeting held in September including service users including Doreen O’Keefe, Adur Senior Forum and three colleagues of
Khim Horton (KH) to consider the way forward and to explore funding opportunities. Together, Ann Emery and the researchers sought funding from the Averil Osborn Fund.

THE PROJECT

Aim

This project aimed to explore the use of a radio play as a vehicle for incorporating discussion, raising awareness and stimulating dialogue around a range of issues affecting both the lives of older people and student nurses.

Our objectives are:

- To produce a radio play based on the voices of older people and student nurses around health and well-being matters
- To foster empathy and understanding between older people and student nurses by working jointly on a radio play.
- To gain further insight into lived experiences of both groups.

METHOD AND DESIGN:

The project team adopted a participatory approach. Because of the constraint of time [the project needed to be completed within one year], several factors needed to be taken into consideration before commencement. These included a) the level of training students are at (e.g. first year, second year or final year); b) which branch (e.g. adult branch or mental health students); c) which module to locate this project in (e.g. in what way would the project activities best map the objectives and learning outcomes of a particular theoretical module); d) how and when to recruit them; e) how many is likely to wish to participate; f) how to manage their participation in this project during their practice placement without compromise their programme outcomes and regulatory requirements.

Gaining access:

Access to our student nurses was sought through various channels. Khim Horton (KH) and Anne Arber (AA) met with academic colleagues to gain access to students and seek their cooperation and support. Access was also sought from the Head of the School as well as Head of Programmes. This was also discussed at the Programme Management Team meeting to maximise ‘exposure’ of this project aim and objectives and to gain support from students’ personal tutors. We identified that the project aims and objectives would best reflect those undertaking the ‘Continuing care module’.
We worked closely with the module leader and students’ Branch Leader to identify appropriate periods in their time-table for the Project leaflets and Participant Information Sheet (PIS) to be distributed.

For older participants, AE liaised closely with her local forum members in relation to the distribution of project leaflet and PIS.

The sample:

We recruited seven student nurses who were in the second year of their course. Two of the students were on the diploma programme and five were on the degree programme. All but one was female.

The original group were six older participants (five women and one man), all known to Age UK West Sussex with four participating in local older people’s forums. Their age ranged from 61 to mid-80s. For the reading and recording of the play, three more older people involved in local amateur dramatics joined the project.

DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected at the end of the project through two focus groups with student nurses, which explored their experience of working with older people during the project.

In addition, as a pilot we aimed to measure empathy in student nurses before the ‘initial’ session with older people and three months later at the end of their project activities. To this end, KH contacted the researchers who developed the Jefferson Scale (2008) that has a nursing student version (Appendix 1). We have been granted permission by the Jefferson Medical College to pilot this with our student participants. Pre and post measures were undertaken for this study (during first meeting and at the last meeting in June).

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

In the development of our radio play, we collaboratively worked out the key activities that are most likely to help facilitate these intergenerational groups to work together. A number of planned group meetings were identified and these dates were made known to all participants so that they could be committed to attending them.

The project comprised the following meetings:

1. Introductory meeting (16th March 2012): Participants (seven student nurses and seven Forum members) travelled to a meeting room at the University of Surrey. The objectives of this introductory meeting were to outline the idea of a radio play and to offer an opportunity to discuss what roles and expectations of each
participant in this project. This session was facilitated by AE, with support from KH and AA. An agenda of the work plan for the duration of the project was also provided.

2. Development of a radio play: Two more meetings, each lasting between 2-3 hours were held during April and May to develop a radio play.

Second session, 26th April 2012: The aim of this session was to continue the conversation started in session one, generate ideas for ‘gaps’ in the draft of the radio play to date and to share some laughter, learning and understanding.

Activities included ‘reconnecting the circle’ creating a collage around the theme ‘caring’ followed by discussions, a look at the working draft of the play, an exercise around ‘the scarecrow’s perspective’.

Third session, 17th May 2012: Focused on reading the play, making changes, and also introducing three new older people. The name of the play ‘Making Friends’ was chosen by the participants.

We audio-recorded the discussion prior to the first recording of ‘Making Friends’. We identified different roles for participants including ‘Director’, script writer, performers, reviewers, etc. We also enlisted the help of Brian Johnson, manager of the University of Surrey TV studio to help record this play and Ian Arber to help provide the background music and sound effects for the play.

3. Performing and recording the radio play ‘AFRESH’ took place in June 2012. A total of about thirty people attended the first recording of the play. Sue Venn, of Averil Osborn Fund was invited to the recording. Professor Karen Bryan, Head of School handed out all participants their Certification of Participation in the project; each participant was given a gift token.

Photographs and interviews with the local press were also taken. Appendices (2-4) illustrate how the radio play reached out to local communities and beyond.

ETHICS

Ethical approval was sought and obtained from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee (Appendix 5). Confidentiality was maintained throughout the project in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Participants were given Participant Information Sheet prior to the data collection. They had the opportunity to withdraw at
any point including withdrawing their contribution subsequent to the interview. All participants gave both verbal and written consent.

WHAT DID WE FIND?

In this section a description of our own observations of group activities is provided here. Our key findings included:

- Strategic planning by project members before each session played an important role in decisions about how best to nurture and facilitate communication and openness including involvement of all participants and what materials to use;
- Intergenerational dialogue worked effectively in small groups and topic focused within a safe environment in which participants felt able to share;
- Experiential facilitation enabled an understanding and valuing of each other’s experience and contribution;
- Dispels students’ perceptions of ageing and older people;
- Older people felt ‘protective’ the younger student nurses which was unexpected from the researchers’ perspective and supporting younger participants especially the quieter students;
- The small group activities involved in the development of the radio play provided the ideas and materials for the play;
- Older people highly valued the opportunity to be in the university and see how the radio play was developed and recorded at the University studio.
- We compared the baseline and end of project measures using Jefferson Empathy scale and did not find any stark differences; given the small sample size it is therefore not surprising to find that there was no significant impact.

ADVISORY GROUP

Our advisory group comprised Professor Helen Allan, Director of CRNME and Jane Leng, Senior Tutor. The group met informally in 11th June 2012 to provide guidance on how best to ‘launch’ the Radio Play as well as how best to embed the use of the radio play in our nursing curriculum.

DISSEMINATION

The project team used various channels to publicise the project work. These included:

- The Centre for Research in Nursing and Midwifery Education (CRNME) website-Appendix One;
- A recording of the Record Play took place on 18 June where various guests were invited including Sue Venn, Osborn Averil Trust.
- Surrey Radio: KH and one of the student participants gave a Radio interview on Saturday.
- Owen Davies wrote a feature about the work in Nursing Standard- see Appendix Three.
- A feature was published in the Surrey Advertiser (see Appendix 2).
- KH and AA have submitted an abstract for the Royal College of Nursing Older People’s Conference, March 2013 – this has since been accepted as a concurrent oral presentation as well as a poster presentation.
- On-going- KH has invited student participants to write a reflective paper for *Generations Review*, a newsletter of the British Society of Gerontology (BSG).
- Plan to submit an abstract to the BSG conference, 2013

**REFLECTIONS**

This project was for me (Ann Emery) a continuation of conversations had with older people throughout the Age UK West Sussex older people’s forums. Seeing the sharing of learning, laughter and understanding between the student nurses and older people was very rewarding. There is no doubt from the feedback of the older participants how valuable an experience they felt the project to be. For me personally, the project proved that if we can find ways of helping people to see each other as people, rather than defined by age or as ‘other,’ all are enriched and a sense of shared inclusivity rather than exclusion is the result.

From the researchers’ perspective this has been a very rewarding experience. At times we were uncertain how the radio play was going to pen out and which participant might put themselves forward for various ‘roles’ in the play. It is the journey of the unknown about how this intergenerational approach will map out that sometimes kept KH and AA excited as we began to see earlier on that our participants were ‘engaging’ with one another and were ‘making’ friends.

Voices from our older participants tell us that it was a worthwhile thing to do and that they were pleasantly surprised by the positive outcomes of the project. Friendships, ‘getting an understanding of where they (the nurses) are coming from’ and ‘we have had a wonderful time in sharing’.
CONCLUSIONS

The development of a radio-play using a participatory approach with both older people and student nurses has provided all participants and the project team an enriching experience. It is made possible because of several factors. These included:

- We had the opportunity to collaborate with Age UK and Ann Emery in particular who had the skills to organise and write the play.
- We had an invaluable asset in having a recording studio at the University to enable us to record the play in a recording studio.
- In the future we would give more time to preparing the students for recording the play we had the opportunity for one rehearsal but more coaching in terms of reading the play would have helped the students.

The play was a ‘gentle’ one, with most of the action set on an allotment plot. Using a writer with a different experience, perhaps of having worked in hospitals or care establishments, would lead to a different play.

We started the project with a very open mind as to what play would emerge. It would be possible to start with project with some themes in place – for example, it had to take place in a hospital setting, it could cover two different time periods – maybe an older person who used to be a nurse and is now, in her 80s a patient, so combining flashbacks for example. Or it could tell the story of a student nurse in the 1950s and one today.

We have developed this idea and feel that we have the opportunity here to showcase how older people can lead a project involving academics and student nurses in a higher education setting. We strive to become partners in the preparation of nurses to counteract negative images and perceptions of ageing. We wish to offer an alternative perspective through the voices of AFRESH. We believe that the process of this partnership will break down age-related barriers and offers the opportunity to come together in the learning and sharing of experience. Furthermore, this experience can be shared with others who might wish to learn about how to develop a radio-play as well as a trigger for discussion relating to health and ageing. Finally, the voices of older people and student nurses together is something new and may never been heard before in this way.

LIMITATIONS

From the modest funding we have received we are delighted with what we have achieved. The time constraint has been a great challenge as we had to make the best of students’ availability to ensure that their participation in this project had not compromised their own study time whilst completing their nursing programme.
REFERENCES

Age UK West Sussex (2009) ‘Have you ever wondered what it was like not to be young or middle aged’ A report for the Equality Commission.


APPENDIX 1: JEFFERSON SCALE OF EMPATHY

Jefferson Scale of Empathy

Nursing Student version

Instructions: Using a ball-point pen, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by marking the appropriate circle to the right of each statement.

Please use the following 7-point scale (a higher number on the scale indicates more agreement):
Mark one and only one response for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Nurses' understanding of their patients' feelings and the feelings of their patients' families does not influence medical or surgical treatment.
2. Patients feel better when their nurses understand their feelings.
3. It is difficult for a nurse to view things from patients' perspectives.
4. Understanding body language is as important as verbal communication in nurse-patient relationships.
5. A nurse's sense of humor contributes to a better clinical outcome.
6. Because people are different, it is difficult to see things from patients' perspectives.
7. Attention to patients' emotions is not important in history taking.
8. Attentiveness to patients' personal experiences does not influence treatment outcomes.
9. Nurses should try to stand in their patients' shoes when providing care to them.
10. Patients value a nurse's understanding of their feelings which is therapeutic in its own right.
11. Patients' illnesses can be cured only by medical or surgical treatment; therefore, nurses' emotional ties with patients do not have a significant influence in medical or surgical treatment.
12. Asking patients about what is happening in their personal lives is not helpful in understanding their physical complaints.
13. Nurses should try to understand what is going on in their patients' minds by paying attention to their non-verbal cues and body language.
14. I believe that emotion has no place in the treatment of medical illness.
15. Empathy is a therapeutic skill without which the nurse's success is limited.
16. Nurses' understanding of the emotional status of their patients, as well as that of their families is one important component of the nurse-patient relationship.
17. Nurses should try to think like their patients in order to render better care.
18. Nurses should not allow themselves to be influenced by strong personal bonds between their patients and their family members.
19. I do not enjoy reading non-medical literature or the arts.
20. I believe that empathy is an important therapeutic factor in medical treatment.
Nursing students help to pull down age barriers

NURSING students at the University of Surrey were very keen to show they are not going to be like that in their careers. They were. . . .

‘Every student I saw was very keen to show they are not going to be like that in their careers. They were very keen to show they are not going to be like that in their careers. They were very keen to show they are not going to be like that in their careers. They were very keen to show they are not going to be like that in their careers. They were very keen to show they are not going to be like that in their careers. They were very keen to show they are not going to be like that in their careers. They were very keen to show they are not going to be like that in their careers. They were very keen to show they are not going to be like that in their careers. They were very keen to show they are not going to be like that in their careers. They were very keen to show they are not going to be like that in their careers.'
APPENDIX 3: UNIVERSITY NEWS

Website:

http://www2.surrey.ac.uk/fhms/research/centres/crnme/currentactivity/index.htm
APPENDIX 4: A STUDENT NURSE’S ACCOUNT

CAREERS STUDENT LIFE

Sound approach to empathy

Owen Davies recounts how students worked with older people to produce a radio play about quality care

Towards the end of one of our lectures at the University of Surrey earlier this year, the tutor asked for volunteers to participate in a project. The aim was to develop nursing students’ empathy with older people.

Our tutor wanted us to produce a radio play, called Making Friends, that could be used to help other students gain an insight into older people’s lives and the challenges they face.

Childhood memories

This approach had not been tried before, so I was immediately interested. I was paired by six student colleagues and our first task was to meet with Age UK members to learn about older people's concerns.

In our first session, the people from Age UK talked about their childhood memories, which we hoped to incorporate into the play. They also discussed the care they had received from health professionals, some of which had been below standard owing to communication problems and uncaring attitudes.

They cited examples of good care, and positive behaviour included a friendly manner, taking the time to make a cup of tea for a patient and ensuring they have important items within easy reach.

Playwright and Age UK member Ann Emery used these comments to write the first draft of Making Friends, which was presented at the second meeting.

My fellow students and I, along with the Age UK members, were asked for our thoughts on the draft. Then we were put into mixed groups of students and Age UK members and were asked for our views on the play’s main characters.

The third session involved recording the play at the university’s recording studio. This was overseen by Brian Johnson, an experienced broadcast and sound engineer. The various parts were played by students and Age UK members. I was lucky enough to play Max, a nursing student, for which I had to develop ways of sounding empathetic and caring.

Some of my colleagues assisted with the production by providing sound effects and voice-overs.

Broadcast

The play was produced primarily as a teaching tool to highlight the importance of empathy when caring for older patients. A clip has been broadcast on BBC Surrey radio.

I feel privileged to have taken part in this project and hope that this novel approach to working with older people to communicate the basic tenets of caring and empathy will be adopted by others.

Everyone involved thoroughly enjoyed the experience and we were sad when it concluded. We are hoping the Age UK members will be able to attend our graduation ceremony in 2014.

My lasting memory of this venture will be the fun we had and the energy, humour and vitality that the Age UK members brought to the project.

Owen Davies is a nursing student at the University of Surrey

The play’s storyline

Making Friends is about nursing student Max, medical student Jalsa and a rather grumpy retired man called Arthur.

Arthur disapproves of the gardening practices of two young medical students who have the allotment next to his, which was previously kept by Arthur’s recently deceased friend. Arthur has lost his wife through dementia and is finding it difficult to cope with his losses and his arthritis.

A clash of cultures occurs when Arthur confronts the students holding a rowdy barbecue on the allotment. But Arthur has an accident witnessed by Max and Jalsa, who call an ambulance and then visit him in hospital. Eventually, they become friends and the students understand what Arthur is going through.
APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL APPROVAL

Dr Khim Horton
Health & Social Care
FHMS
Ethics Committee

23 February 2012
Dear Dr Horton

A study on fostering empathy between students and older people - a practical approach (APRESH) EC/2012/15/FHMS

On behalf of the Ethics Committee, I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis described in the submitted protocol and supporting documentation.

Date of confirmation of ethical opinion: 23 February 2012.

The final list of documents reviewed by the Committee is as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed protocol for the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information sheets for participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment adverts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of insurance cover: Zurich Municipal</td>
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</tbody>
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This opinion is given on the understanding that you will comply with the University’s Ethical Guidelines for Teaching and Research. If the project includes distribution of a survey or questionnaire to members of the University community, researchers are asked to include a statement advising that the project has been reviewed by the University’s Ethics Committee.

The Committee should be notified of any amendments to the protocol, any adverse reactions suffered by research participants, and if the study is terminated earlier than expected with reasons. Please be advised that the Ethics Committee is able to audit research to ensure that researchers are abiding by the University requirements and guidelines.

You are asked to note that a further submission to the Ethics Committee will be required in the event that the study is not completed within five years of the above date.

Please inform me when the research has been completed.

Yours sincerely

Glenn Moulton
Secretary, University Ethics Committee
Academic Registry

cc:  Professor S Williamson, Chairman, Ethics Committee