

Evaluation of Workshops for Newcastle University Medical Students

Wednesday 25 October 2017

'This session has reaffirmed my suspicions that displaying some genuine humanity in practice, and acting more like another human being- rather than a medical robot- is often the solution'

- From a medical student

I. Introduction

The medical student's workshops have been delivered in partnership by the Health and Race Equality Forum (HAREF), the Refugee Regional Forum North East (RRF) and members of the wider HAREF network for a number of years.

A total of 16 concurrent workshops was commissioned by Newcastle University, and delivered to fourth year medical students from Newcastle Medical School. The aim of the workshops is to give the medical students 'food for thought', in terms of what they need to think about as doctors providing health services to people going through or who have been through the asylum seeking process.

II. Student Evaluations

Students were asked to complete evaluations about the session they attended and we received 259 evaluation sheets from the medical students. There were main themes to the feedback for each of the evaluation questions, and these themes were similar to other years.

Overall students were extremely positive about these workshops, and gained a real insight into the issues affecting asylum seekers and refugees and healthcare. It raised issues that they had not considered before, and they really benefited from talking with someone who had first-hand experience of these issues.

i. What stood out for students

The main themes were

- **The opportunity to gain insight via first hand personal stories**
 - 'Good to hear first-hand from someone who themselves has faced difficulties/challenges as well as someone who sees and works with it every day.'
 - 'The honesty and willingness to talk about personal issues. I felt like I learnt a lot about troubles facing asylum seekers, and reinforced the need for good communication within the medical setting.'
- **Recognition of how difficult it was for asylum seekers to access services, particularly health and the restrictions on them**
 - 'Understanding the healthcare limitations refugees face even when they're in the UK and supposedly should be able to access the NHS but actually for many refugees healthcare is hard to access.'
 - 'The struggles faced by those who are asylum seekers and refugees in using NHS services and also their own struggles day to day.'
- **That support services for asylum seekers and refugees are ad-hoc**
- That luck plays a large role in how quickly a refugee/asylum seeker is integrated into the country – they need the right combination of good social workers and

housing companies so that they can learn about rights and access to healthcare.'

ii. What students gained in terms of professional practice

The main themes were:

- **Organising appropriate interpreter support**
 - 'An understanding of the problems that asylum seekers may face, e.g. lack of information, language barriers and how this can be avoided such as ensuring that you have the correct language interpreter, finding out what the individual's expectations are.'
- **The importance of good communication skills and making people feel welcome**
 - 'How to be more patient when communicating with refugees and help them feel more relaxed when accessing health care.'
 - 'The massive emphasis on good communication and listening.'
 - 'The importance of making an effort to have a welcoming atmosphere, e.g. saying hello in their language.'
- **Greater understanding and awareness of the issues asylum seekers and refugees face**
 - 'Thinking about matching a refugee's needs to the clinician so female GPs for female patients. The need for a clinic specifically for refugees/asylum seekers where interpreters are available.'
 - 'Treat people as individuals and take time to respect their backgrounds and their cultures. Take the time to ask about differences in culture in terms of accessing healthcare.'
- **The impact of a bad health interaction on the individual and their community**
 - 'A good point was raised at the end about understanding the impact of our interaction with one patient in a community. It is important to remember that when we leave a patient with a good/bad experience it is this that they will tell their family/friends.'
 - 'I will be more mindful of cultural differences and ensure to make asylum seekers/refugees feel as welcome as possible and try to help them access it in future.'
- **Asylum seekers and refugees may not have the understanding of how the NHS works. They may also not be eligible for free health care**
 - 'I learned a lot about the barriers to healthcare and in the future I will be more proactive in trying to support people that are new to the system.'
 - 'Be aware of the impact of prescription costs when on a tight weekly budget.'
 - 'The info about the new charges for asylum seekers and the relevant parts of legislation involving the treatment of refugees.'

iii. What information students felt was missing from the workshop

Students' said they would have found useful:

- Definitions for an asylum seekers and refugees at the start of the session and a brief overview of the asylum process
- Information about who is entitled to free care and who is not, and what documents are needed
- What are the most common medical issues faced by asylum seekers
- Information around communication techniques
- Information about how to improve their work practice to help asylum seekers and refugees. Some students felt there was a discussion on what the problems are, and not much time given to solutions to this

iv. Student suggestions to improve the workshop

Students said:

- They would like a short PowerPoint presentation with some bare facts about refugees and asylum seekers, as well as things medical students and doctors need to know to provide care. This was an issue that a lot of student raised in their evaluations
- They would like handouts on: the main issues for asylum seekers accessing healthcare, health care statistics specific to asylum seekers and refugees and a summary of the learning objectives.
- Some students wanted a session which included a healthcare professional describing their challenges and strategies in delivering care to refugees, and with more specific advice for them to apply to their practice
- Some students felt the session was too long at 2 hours, and that the groups were too large and that there was a degree of disconnect between activities.

Overall the workshops were very well received by students, and facilitators and group members did an excellent job on the day. They provoked conversations about the key concerns and issues for asylum seekers and refugees to access healthcare. We will be using feedback from these sessions to improve these sessions in the future.

We would like to thank all the facilitators and the Regional Refugee Forum group working group members for their time and input into these productive sessions.