



Michael's research changes A&E admission procedures

Bolton based Michael Dewhurst recently gained a Certificate in Advising on Service and Education Development from the University of Central Lancashire as part of the North West Demonstration Project in Mental Health. Commissioned by five education and training consortia in the region, the project aims to test the delivery of competency-based education and training given to mental health professionals.

Working with a group of carers and users of the mental health services, Michael was required to complete an individual project demonstrating that he was competent in making enquiries about a service and delivering feedback to its managers and staff. Michael first heard about the course through the Bolton Patients Council for Mental health and initially got involved because he was interested in doing research on alcoholism but found few people willing to assist him and so changed to survey mental health users admitted to the accident and emergency department.

Undertaking his research at Royal Bolton Hospital, Michael's main research involved attending mental health drop-ins and day centres and asking people to complete a questionnaire in confidence. From the replies he discovered that patients are often shouted at on assessment and aren't listened to, that staff failed to take patients mental health problems into account on admission to the emergency department and that there are often assumptions that patients with mental health problems are wasting the staff's time.

Michael concluded his findings by recommending that staff should be trained to give valued treatment to patients, the need for mental health patients to be valued, to involve service users in developing the admissions process and to respect the individual regardless of the presenting problem or behaviour.

Since presenting his findings Royal Bolton Hospital have implemented various changes to their accident and emergency assessment procedures which include staff receiving Mental Health Awareness training along with more funding being sought for specialist psychiatric nurses.

Sector Manager of the Mental Health Directorate of the Bolton Hospitals NHS Trust, Simon Pierce, said, "The Trust is already involved in a number of service users advisory projects, Across the trust there is a patient council, which feed back to staff, who feel that better results are being achieved using this feedback. There is even a two-day staff induction programme designed by patients, which tries to inform staff in the directorate what the mental health services are like from a users point of view."

Michael enjoyed the course and said, "By doing the project, I have found that I am not as ignorant as I was to those who have mental illness problems and look on it in a different light."

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