



CHKS Awards – Western Health and Social Care Trust

Good leadership can be a powerful driver for creating change

Malcolm Wilkinson won the CHKS Award for Inspiring Leadership 2022. He has worked in the Radiotherapy Department at Western Health and Social Care Trust (Western Trust) since 2015, first as a Treatment Team Leader and later progressing to take the role of Lead Clinical Specialist Radiographer. His drive and commitment to seek the best patient experience and outcomes for his patients as well as championing the role of Therapy Radiographers are an inspiration to those around him.

Malcolm's desire to make a difference is evidenced in the success of the Prostate Pre-education Programme which is now available to all prostate cancer patients at the North West Cancer Centre (NWCC). Its success is in empowering patients to understand what treatment preparation is necessary, and why. It has resulted in reduced treatment times as well as fewer rescans. By sharing his knowledge with other staff in the department, Malcolm has ensured the success of the project and its future sustainability.

Malcolm set up the project after he became aware of the need for information and treatment challenges for patients who were undergoing prostate radiotherapy. He was able to use his wealth of clinical experience and specialist practice knowledge to lead a project that put the patient firmly at the centre of bespoke pre-treatment education sessions.

Taking place in non-clinical settings at the nearby Macmillan Health and Well-being campus, the sessions are scheduled into the patients' care pathway before they attend their planning CT scan. Patients are provided with all the information they

need regarding treatment preparation to familiarise them with what to expect. Malcolm collaborated with other specialist radiographers to enable the virtual software PEARL to be used to communicate the different techniques and concepts of radiotherapy in a highly visual and compelling environment to patients and their families/friends. As well as bowel and bladder function, holistic needs assessments are also completed during the sessions enabling staff to address any concerns prior to treatment.



Evidence shows the sessions have made a clinical difference to the radiotherapy pathway, by reducing the number of rescans needed. Increased patient understanding results in improved patient compliance which reduces the need for treatment interruptions or additional imaging. Feedback from session attendees was also overwhelmingly positive showing improved understanding and improved patient confidence to lead their own care. The Prostate Pre-education sessions have now been adopted into standard care for all prostate patients at the NWCC.

“ Quite simply, a project like this would not have succeeded without the close teamwork of all staff involved. There were many aspects of the project that required the skills of professionals from administration staff, clinical software radiographer, treatment and pre-treatment radiographers and the staff at the Macmillan Centre. Co-ordinating the project planning and the tremendous skills of our team was vital for it to succeed.”

Malcolm Wilkinson, Lead Clinical Specialist Radiographer

Knowledge sharing and collaboration can inspire the desire to improve. The success of this work has led to Malcolm supporting the head and neck rehabilitation pilot at the NWCC comprising a combination of allied health professionals and clinical nurse specialists. It is also intended that this programme will soon be piloted for breast cancer patients.

Sharing knowledge and facilitating collaboration between teams is a fundamental part of creating a culture change that leads to improved patient outcomes and efficiency within the trust.

The CHKS accreditation framework places significant focus on finding fresh ways to seek continuous improvement within the organisation, even in areas that appear to be operating well. Malcolm's knowledge and experience enabled him to see where change needed to be made and his ability to share and encourage others to work with him has enabled the project to succeed.

Support from CHKS in creating the report was also crucial. Suzanne built up a good relationship with the team, enabling her to be able to work closely with CHKS to ensure she was receiving the information she needed for the report.

“ Malcolm shares his knowledge in two ways. His interaction with patients is amazing and he's constantly praised through our patient feedback. From a staff member point of view he very naturally includes people - either as a colleague on a par with him, or as a junior member trying to get involved in new activities. He allows autonomy and allows you to run with an idea. It's really a unique leadership trait.”

Rebecca Durnin, Therapeutic Radiographer

Rebecca says Malcolm's ability to create change extends across the organisation. He ensures everyone works as a team and is well-respected throughout the trust for his work.

“ He is very approachable, no matter what the problem is. He will help you break a problem down, realising that it might take a wider team to solve it, but keep you involved throughout, even if it has to go up to the trust board and back down again. You can never feel stupid around him. It's that behaviour and that attitude that are so important.”

Rebecca Durnin, Therapeutic Radiographer

Malcolm was surprised and honoured when he heard he had received the leadership award.

“ We have a fantastic team of staff at NWCC who work tirelessly to provide the best possible treatment for our patients. I could not have received the award without their support and commitment to improving patient care and outcomes.”

Malcolm Wilkinson, Lead Clinical Specialist Radiographer

To find out more, please get in touch
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