



Green Walking Project Case Study

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust: Walking Group

Project Description

In November 2017, staff from the psychology, well-being, and occupational therapy (OT) departments at the Warneford Hospital in Oxford created the outdoors focused group where walking from the ward to the green space is an integral part. The psychology lead, OT lead, and patient engagement and project coordinator helped organise and support the group to be set up. The patient engagement and project coordinator runs regular staff training sessions and is available to answer questions. The group involves 1-3 staff members and 1-12 patients from the secure acute ward for men (18-65 years old) along with other interested wards. In order for the group to be successful, it was important to make it inclusive and have the support of patients and assistant support workers (ASWs). During the activity, patients are accompanied by ward ASWs, so the project coordinator is able to lead the project, work 1:1 with individuals from any ward, and become familiar with other patients entering the groups. Patients must have OT leave to participate in the activity; they can undertake some activities on the meadow unsupervised.

The group utilises a public space close to the hospital, Warneford Meadow, which is approximately 1.5 hectares of meadow, maturing scrub wood, and orchard. The activity occurs on a weekly or daily basis depending on staff and lasts for 1 to 1.5 hours. While on the walk, staff and patients might pick up garbage along the way. The project coordinator decides the activities and the ASWs can also request activities. A steering group supports the outdoors focused group.

Evaluation is being undertaken on the project through the use of feedback questionnaires administered to staff and patients from each activity session looking at the use of the meadow and perceived impact on the patient.

Benefits

Patient Outcomes: By partaking in activities in green spaces, patient outcomes can be improved through boosting well-being and encouraging healthy behaviours (Branching Out, 2009). This can help in the recovery process for the patient and build long term relationships with green spaces.

Environmental/Financial: While environmental and financial benefits do not directly arise from this project, the activities undertaken such as picking up garbage could help the environment. The activity is also low cost to create and participate in. By utilising green spaces, this places value in them and protects them.

Social: There are a range of possible benefits, from an opportunity to socialise between patients and staff to outdoor physical activity. The walking activities usually include an educational lesson on the ecology of the site or a specific unusual plant encountered on the perambulations.

Financial Appraisal

This project has been financially supported by the Oxford Health Charitable Funds.

Barriers encountered

Challenges to operating the walking group were:

- Obtaining involvement and support of ward staff
 - If ASWs did not personally enjoy the outdoors, then their patients did not get to take part in the activity as patients need to be accompanied by the ASWs from their ward during the activity.
 - Some wards have not acknowledged the existence of or chosen to not partake in the available activities.

Risks

Health and safety assessments are completed for the activity. All activities are also assessed for risk.

For more information please contact:

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References

Branching Out. (2009). *Branching Out: Resource Guide Greenspace and Conservation on Referral*. Forestry Commission Scotland. Retrieved from <https://www.gcvgreennetwork.gov.uk/publications/237-branching-out-resource-guide-greenspace-and-conservation-on-referral>