Title: Developing a Healthy Work Environment: An Action Learning Approach to Improving Quality of Life for People Living in Residential Aged Care

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Session Title: CLINICAL SESSION: Global Strategies to Enhance Professional Development
Slot: CE 02: Sunday, April 14, 2013: 10:30 AM-11:45 AM
Scheduled Time: 10:50 AM

Keywords: Action Learning, quality of life and teamwork


Abstract Text: Developing a healthy work environment: An action learning approach to improving quality of life for people living in residential aged care

Providing quality care for people living and dying in aged care homes requires nurses to have a unique set of skills. Nurses working in this environment need to be able to collaborate effectively with a range of health professionals to ensure residents' complex care needs are met. Furthermore, they need to be able to communicate sensitively with residents and family members as transition into a residential aged care home is not always easy. In a residential aged care setting where the skill mix of staff varies a healthy work environment is imperative to maintaining quality of life for residents.

We identified a need to develop an innovative way to improve quality of life for residents and chose an action learning approach to developing an education program that addresses the need for cultural change. The program was developed using resources from My Home Life (MHL) United Kingdom (UK) and is supported by Professor Julienne Meyer director of MHL. Action learning provides space for reflective learning amongst participants and supports individual and organisational development. It is a simple and collaborative means of supporting change by enhancing and valuing individual performance. This approach has proved to be extremely successful in the UK and has resulted in significant sustainable cultural change in care homes.

Our program was implemented in a rural health service in regional Victoria, Australia and our research data has identified this approach generates positive energy and teamwork leading to improvement in person centred care. This paper will demonstrate that an action learning approach to education supports a healthy work environment and that this leads to improving quality of life for older people living and dying in residential aged care homes.