

PhD Studentship Newsletter No. 1 (July 2021)

The Development of an Intervention to Enable and Encourage Healthcare Professionals to Provide Appropriate Support and Information about Sexual Issues to Cancer Survivors and their Intimate Partners

Funded by Fortuneswell Cancer Trust, Bournemouth University
& the National Institute for Health Research Applied Research Collaboration Wessex

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

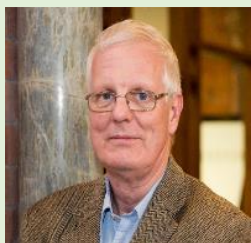
We know that many patients experience sexual dysfunction following cancer treatment and we also know that it isn't easy to discuss sexual concerns. Given this potentially negative gap in care, this project is aiming to develop an intervention to help healthcare professionals discuss sexual concerns with patients and their partners. Initially, the project focus will be on undertaking two literature reviews plus protocol development. Once the research is fully approved, patients and their partners along with hospital staff will be recruited from Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. The study is anticipated to involve the completion of a survey, interviews and participation in focus groups.

INTRODUCING THE STUDENT



Suzanne Sheppard began her PhD in June 2021 and is grateful for the support provided by all the funding organisations. Having recently completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Oncology at Newcastle University, she is delighted to be continuing her education with this PhD project. Working at University Hospitals Dorset (Poole Hospital) for the past six years, initially as an Oncology Research Nurse and then as a Gynae-Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, has provided an important foundation for this research opportunity. Prior to that, Suzanne worked in the pharmaceutical industry monitoring clinical trials following completion of a BSc (Hons) in Microbiology at Imperial College London.

INTRODUCING THE SUPERVISORY TEAM



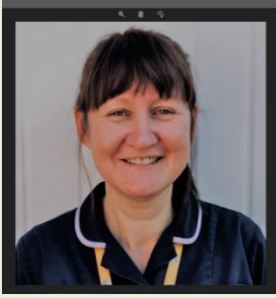
Sam Porter is the Professor of Nursing Sociology and Head of Department of Social Sciences and Social Work at Bournemouth University. A sociologist and a registered nurse, his research interests cross the disciplines. He specialises in the areas of palliative and supportive care and has experience of a wide range of research methods, ranging from qualitative approaches to randomised controlled trials.



Dr Zoë Sheppard is Head of Research at Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and is a demographer by background. She has extensive research experience with a strong publication profile, particularly in quantitative research. For example, she was Senior Lecturer in Quantitative Research Methods at Bournemouth University where she built capacity in quantitative research methods and was Impact Champion. Prior to that she was Research Fellow in Research Methods when she provided support for people doing health research and grant applications through the National Institute for Health Research' Research Design Service.



Dr Sally Lee is MA and BA Programme Lead and Senior Lecturer at Bournemouth University. Sally also undertakes research on a variety of projects including mental capacity, adult safeguarding and sexual well-being. She completed her doctoral research in 2016 exploring social work practice, physical disability and sexual well-being. This work continues and she is currently developing learning materials (including a short film) around sexual well-being for social care and health practitioners. Sally brings to her academic role extensive social work practice experience built up during more than 25 years of working in diverse practice settings and services. Her research uses participatory methods and focuses on often marginalised populations.



Tracy Glen is a Senior Cancer Research Nurse (BSc Hons in Clinical Nursing & BSc Hons Advanced Nurse Practitioner) at Dorset County Hospital who conceived the concept of the PhD study from clinical practice. She will continue to provide clinical advice acting in a Clinical Advisor role. Through working with research patients with cancer, Tracy identified that once active treatment for cancer patients has been completed their contact with health care professionals is often curtailed. The long-term side-effects of the patient's cancer treatment including sexual dysfunction can result in some patients feeling anxious and unsupported, which can have a profound effect upon the quality of life of patients and their partners. In her opinion it is paramount that professionals caring for cancer survivors have the knowledge, confidence, motivation and means to provide appropriate, sensitive and informed support to minimise the negative consequences that cancer and its treatment has on patients' sex lives. She believes that the PhD has the potential to help close this gap and support patients, their partners and health professionals.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Six monthly updates on project progress will be provided to Fortuneswell Cancer Trust.

The next update will be in December 2021.

CONTACT DETAILS

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