

Category A: Best Project in General Practice

Pauline Cooley, Practice Nurse, Health Centre, Athenry, Galway. 'Thou Shalt Hear',

'Thou Shalt Hear' is an information leaflet about ear care, one of the reasons people frequently visit their GP or Practice Nurse. Pauline found that people did not have enough information about how to look after the health of their ears and so developed a leaflet to help. Pauline and her team were aware that lack of information can disempower patients so they developed the leaflet using Plain English as a means to provide information in an easy to understand way. Pauline and her colleagues have also carried out an audit for their project which has shown a reduction in the number of patients having to come back to the surgery for repeat appointments. The leaflet has also improved the existing ear care irrigation service provided to patients.

Inform Display Systems, GP Waiting Room Brochure Display Service

INFORM offers an integrated approach to engage, inform and educate patients through information displays at their doctor's office. They have stands in over 1,300 waiting rooms and provide information to the public as they wait for one of the 14.4 million medical appointments that are booked every year. INFORM helps charities, government departments and pharmaceutical companies to provide practical, relevant and reliable information on everything from giving up smoking to breast feeding to osteoporosis. Their service allows patients to better understand their health, thus allowing them to make more informed decisions. The service also helps healthcare professionals to educate their patients and provide them with up-to-date as they wait to be seen.

Edenpark Surgery, 'Edenhealth Newsletter'

The Edenpark Surgery team decided that they needed to review health communication as part of their involvement with the Safety Association for Edenmore (SAFE). They felt that a newsletter providing topical health information on issues relevant to their patients in an easy to read format would be a great asset. The newsletter is written in Plain English and includes pictures of local events to help make the newsletter appealing to people living in the local area. The Surgery has also been able to promote their pilot youth project through the newsletter which has been key in encouraging 16-21 year olds to the centre, one of the community issues highlighted by SAFE. It has also included advice for safety of the elderly, after a spate of burglaries in the area. The Surgery finds that patients are responding well to the information that they are providing and it is making a real contribution towards improving their patients' health.

Category B: Best Project in a Hospital

Speech and Language Therapy Department, St Mary's Hospital, Phoenix Park. 'Golden Girls Gossip'

The Speech and Language Therapy Department at St Mary's Hospital, Phoenix Park, noticed a lack of meaningful social interactions for a number of ladies residing in their community nursing unit. The ladies were approached about joining a weekly conversation group where they could talk about news, opinions and feelings on various topics of interest to them. The Speech and Language therapists provided communication ramps through pictures, written cues, maps, rating scales and facilitated turn taking. After each 'Golden Girls Gossip', a newsletter is printed with the minutes from the meetings to act as a refresher for the next week. Through the group, the ladies made new friends and were able to offer support and understanding about communication difficulties to each other. This was particularly important for the group, who because of their communication impairment can be socially isolated.

The Cardiac Rehabilitation Working Group. HSE South, 'Take Heart- A Guide to Heart Surgery'

The 'Take Heart' booklet is used by cardiac surgery patients before, during and after they have a heart operation. The cardiac teams use the booklet to provide a single source of simple, clear and accurate information. The booklet helps patients to understand their diagnosis and to make appropriate choices regarding their lifestyle. The project involved health professionals from every acute hospital in Cork and Kerry, as well as input from the Cardiovascular Public Health Nurse, the Health Promotion Department, the HSE South and the Quality Unit at Cork University Hospital. Given that most of the 450 heart patients in Cork University Hospital are men aged 61-80, the group developed the booklet to be easily understandable and enjoyable reading for its readers. The booklet now means that standardised, consistent and reliable information is given out at every acute hospital in Cork and Kerry. Cardiac patients now have information to bring home so that they can read it in their own time where they are more relaxed and can seek the help and support of their family if they need it.

Edette O'Dea, Laser Nurse Specialist, Our Lady's Children's Hospital , Crumlin. 'Journey with me'

When children and their parents attended Our Lady's Children's Hospital for laser treatment, they received a lot of verbal information, which was complex, difficult to understand and often forgotten by the time they were having their treatment. Nurse, Edette O'Dea decided to put all the relevant information together in two booklets, one for parents and one for children. She wrote an easy to read poem for the children that tells the story of their laser treatment and the parent's booklet includes a Frequently Asked Questions section. Pictures are used throughout both booklets to make them easier to read and understand. A one page section on advice before and after treatment makes it easy for parents to recall important points for each stage of treatment. Feedback for the booklet has been very positive. Parents are more informed and have a clear understanding of what their child's treatment will involve. The children also enjoy receiving their own special booklet which makes them more familiar with their treatment.

Susan Brosnan, Mercy University Hospital, Cork. 'Assessment of patient knowledge regarding an antipsychotic medication'

Susan Brosnan and the pharmacy team at Mercy University Hospital, Cork, noticed that patients being prescribed a particular antipsychotic medication had trouble taking it correctly. The team designed a user-friendly patient information leaflet on the medicine which is clear, simple, includes pictures and has a higher readability than the information that comes in the medicine packet. They also designed a questionnaire to assess how much the patient knew about the medicine they were taking and to screen their health literacy. They then provided patients with verbal and written information about their medication geared to their level of literacy. Following this the patients were given the same questionnaire to see if their level of knowledge about the medicine had improved. Combining the pharmacist-design information leaflet with the verbal instructions led to significant improvement in the patient's knowledge.

Category C: Best Project in the Community or in a Social Setting

Irish Osteoporosis Society. 'Bones'

Due to lifestyle changes, today's children are at a much higher risk of developing osteoporosis than previous generations. 'Bones' is a new children's book written by rugby commentator and TV personality Brent Pope, assisted by Michele O'Brien. The illustrated book is aimed at 7-12 year olds and tells the story of a lazy teenager who will not eat healthy food or exercise. The book also provides information to parents. Osteoporosis is a silent disease that manifests itself in childhood and is the leading bone disease in the world, despite the fact that it is preventable and treatable in most cases. The project increased awareness that it is essential for children to be encouraged to eat healthy and exercise to prevent developing osteoporosis in later life. 'Bones' was written in simple English with illustrations that appealed to the target age group. 10,000 copies of the book were distributed through Mace stores and primary schools. The book is helping destroy the myth that osteoporosis is 'an old lady' disease.

Irish Heart Foundation. 'F.A.S.T. Stroke Action Campaign'

F.A.S.T stands for Face, Arms, Speech and Time to call 999. The acronym is designed to help people remember the main warning signs of stroke and act by calling the emergency services. The campaign was launched to tackle the frightening lack of awareness around Ireland's third biggest killer. The Irish Heart Foundation recruited healthcare workers, stroke survivors, stroke support groups and the general public to help them undertake the F.A.S.T. campaign. 160,000 posters, wallet cards and leaflets were distributed nationwide and 900 TV and radio ads were seen or heard by over 2 million people. GPs received materials to display in their surgeries and local groups distributed materials and gave presentations to hospital and community groups. Following the campaign, stroke admissions in Beaumont and Connolly Hospitals increased by 87%, a good indication that people were understanding and remembering the key messages of the campaign.

Category D: Best Health Promotion Project

The Be Active Team, HSE Dublin North East, Health Promotion Department, 'Be Active After School' Activity Programme

Being physically active is one of the most important steps people can take to improve their health. 'Be Active After School' is a 30-week structured activity programme which aims to improve the health literacy of children aged 7-8 and their parents. The programme introduces them to a variety of activities giving them the knowledge and skills to sustain positive physical activity habits as they grow up. The programme takes place after school every week throughout the school year. The resources, which are free for schools, include 30 illustrated sessions and a handbook for teacher leaders. Where possible the activities and formations are illustrated and plain language is used throughout. There are currently over 1,200 children participating in the programme with close to 300 parent leaders and over 130 teacher leaders volunteering their time to facilitate the sessions. This represents a significant impact on the health literacy of the 1,200 participants, raising the awareness of the benefits of physical activity and the level of exercise recommended for adults and children.

National Cancer Screening Service (NCSS), CervicalCheck information leaflet

CervicalCheck provides free smear tests to the 1.1 million eligible women aged 25 to 60, to detect changes in the cell of the cervix before they become cancerous. The focus is on women who are considered 'hard to reach' and are not well informed about their health. Research showed there was confusion amongst women if they were eligible for screening, how much it cost, how a smear test was taken and even where the cervix was. CervicalCheck, in conjunction with NALA, developed a pictorial-led information leaflet entitled "Your free smear test" which simply explains the cervical screening process in an easy to understand format. The leaflet has been distributed among GP practices and community network groups such as RAPID coordinators, community development projects, family resource centres, women's networks, traveller primary care projects, refuges and women with special needs. Feedback has shown that the leaflet has helped to dispel fear and embarrassment around the smear test and has motivated women to avail of the free service.

Irish Society for Quality and Safety in Health (ISQH), 'Let's Talk Medication Safety'

'Let's Talk Medication Safety' is a patient education tool which aims to encourage the public to play an active role in the management of their medication and work in partnership with healthcare providers to reduce errors and improve safe practice. Health literacy was key to ensuring the publication was user-friendly and accessible to the widest possible audience. Patients and healthcare professionals were involved in all stages of development of the booklet, as well as representatives from pharmacy, medicine patient support groups, policy making institutions and pharmaceutical organisations. Research showed that 75% of patients who received the booklet learned something new from it and 50% said that they changed their behaviour in relation to medication safety, particularly on issues such as storage, checking that they had received the correct medication and taking medicine as directed.

Category E: Best Health Communication Through Journalism

John O'Mahony, Irish Examiner, 'Suicide in Ireland'

The Irish Examiner, led by News Editor John O'Mahony, put together the Suicide in Ireland initiative to find out why over 500 people take their lives in Ireland each year and to put a human face on this national crisis. A 20 page supplement was published with the newspaper, based on interviews with people affected by suicide, giving them the opportunity to share their problems, to tell their stories and to share their pain, frustration and hope. A booklet was also provided to give advice and information to people affected by suicide. A range of groups contributed to the booklet including the National Office for Suicide Prevention, the HSE, and suicide and mental health advocacy groups. 700,000 copies of the booklet and supplement were distributed for free with the newspaper and an additional 200,000 copies were distributed through national suicide support group Console and community network RAPID. Thousands of copies were also distributed to schools, youth groups, community groups, parents' associations, the HSE and Amnesty International. The campaign received national attention and helped spark much needed public debate around Suicide in Ireland.

John McCarthy and Liam O'Brien, Documentary on One, RTE Radio 1, 'Lives Less Lived'

Lives Less Lived aimed to challenge stigma and open up public debate on mental health care in Ireland, raise awareness of the role that society as a whole has to play in mental health care and above all, give a family the opportunity to tell their very personal story in the hope that it may help another family. Often, the people who are actually in mental health care find themselves being spoken of or for; Lives Less Lived gave a brother and sister who have direct experience of mental health care the opportunity to speak for themselves. The documentary traces a woman's journey into the world of institutionalism in the 1950's until today, and along the way questions how this can happen to somebody and what we can do to ensure that this never happens to anyone else. The documentary was very well received, with listeners writing to RTE to tell them how 'stunning,' 'powerful,' and 'moving' they found it.

Siobhan Holliman, The Tuam Herald, 'Tubby toddlers can mean trouble'

The increasing obesity rate is of huge concern for healthcare professionals. However, while there is much media attention on how adults can lose weight, the problem on childhood obesity is not highlighted as frequently. Through her research, Siobhan became aware that many people were unaware of how the foods they were buying were affecting their children's health and weight from an early age. The information was broken down under smaller headings and points making it easier to read and digest. The food pyramid was included as a useful visual aid in showing what food families should be eating more or less of. Phone numbers and websites where readers could get more information on the topic were also included. The article sparked a reaction from readers who were shocked by the images used but said that they were encouraged to take a more proactive approach to their child's health as a result of reading it.