Anxiety Management in Practice; Developing a Relaxation CD

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Background The impact of living with a life-limiting illness and the effects of living with physical and psychological symptoms and impact can create high levels of anxiety for both the patient and their carer. The most common issues that can exacerbate anxiety are breathlessness, pain, fatigue and the anticipation of what the future holds.

An occupational therapist, complementary therapist and hypnotherapist provide supportive interventions to patients and carers. Evaluation of these services reports a positive impact of anxiety reduction after sessions but this often reduces over time.

The therapists were eager to find ways of increasing the efficacy of these sessions and support the individuals to feel empowered to support themselves outside their sessions using the techniques gained.

Aims To produce a relaxation CD with different styles of relaxation to support and develop their ability to relax in their everyday lives.

Method A search established what relaxation CDs were available. There was no appropriate relaxation CD with mixed relaxation styles available. We focused on four approaches:

- Guided imagery
- Progressive muscular relaxation
- Autogenic relaxation
- Mindfulness.

A local composer offered to record our own CD for free. From experience we knew some people prefer music and others only the spoken word. We piloted the CD with 20 people. Overall the feedback was positive with some modifications suggested.

Findings Two people didn’t like the CD but the others continued to use the CD regularly reporting a reduction in insomnia, breathlessness and anxiety.

Conclusions The CD has been very well received and has been reported to improve relaxation using a non-invasive approach.

Implications for practice The CD is now used in the breathlessness group, with our patients and carers and is available on the ward for patients and staff and for sale in our shops.