



Complementary and Alternative Therapy Use in a rural Radiation Oncology Department: Increasing staff knowledge, confidence, discussion and documentation.



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Aim:

To ascertain if implementing a screening tool and staff education increases Complementary and Alternative Therapy (CAT) documentation, staff knowledge and staff confidence in discussing CAT use with patients receiving care at a rural Radiation Oncology Unit in Lismore.

Method:

Staff completed a baseline questionnaire regarding their knowledge, views and confidence relating to CAT use by patients alongside a baseline audit of patient records for CAT documentation. Participants attended an intervention session and completed a post intervention questionnaire. A post intervention audit of patient records was conducted alongside a follow up questionnaire 6 months post intervention.

Results:

From baseline to post intervention there was a statistically significant increased shift in staff knowledge and confidence ($p=0.001-0.01$). However participants perceived views of CATs did not change as a result of the intervention ($p=0.261-1.000$) nor did some aspects of CAT documentation ($p = 0.135 - 0.392$).

The observed shift was sustained over a 6 month period, as there was no significant difference between the post intervention and the follow up results in knowledge, views and confidence categories ($p = 0.058 - 1.00$).

The baseline audit compared to the post intervention audit yielded a statistically significant increase in documentation. There was an increase of CAT use mentioned in patient records from 14% (15/108) to 40% (35/88) ($p < 0.001$). Post intervention 50% of records (44 /88) had the screening tool present ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions:

The implementation of a screening tool and staff education increased CAT documentation, staff knowledge and confidence when discussing CAT use with patients at the Lismore Radiation Oncology department and could be implemented by other departments.

KEYWORDS: Radiotherapy, complementary and alternative therapy (or medicine), education

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Lisa Delaney is a Radiation Therapist at North Coast Cancer Institute, Lismore having previously worked in a number of Australian and international rural and metropolitan centres over the past 10 years. She identified an opportunity to improve practice for an increasing cohort of patients using complementary therapies while receiving radiation therapy and is passionate about integrative health.



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