

Psychology Service for people affected by a life threatening illness

Introduction

This leaflet will give you information about the support offered to patients and their families who are coping with a life threatening illness by the Psychology Service.

What is the Psychology Service?

A range of support is available to people who have had or who are affected by a serious or life threatening illness. As part of this support, you may find it helpful to see a practitioner psychologist who specialises in how to cope with the stresses and strains of such illnesses.

What is a practitioner psychologist?

- Practitioner psychologists are registered to work in the NHS by the Health and Care Professionals Council. They may also use the titles of clinical, counselling or health psychologist.
- Practitioner psychologists are trained to understand thoughts, emotions, behaviours and relationships. We do not prescribe medicine or admit people into hospital. We are not the same as psychiatrists, who are medical doctors trained to treat mental illness.

Why have this service?

Having a very serious illness can be difficult to cope with for anyone. You can deal with some of these difficulties yourself, maybe with help from family and friends, or with the support of your health care team (nurses and doctors, for example).

Some problems benefit from the help of a psychologist.

For example, some people might say:

- 'I just can't get my head around what's happened to me'
- 'Since my wife became ill, it's so hard to talk about the future'

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Department

Psychology

Review due

November 2021

Patient Information

- 'I'm finding it hard to cope with feeling so sad'
- 'I get so scared about going for appointments and treatment'
- 'I feel like the rug's been pulled from under my feet'
- 'Everything's about the illness - I'm losing touch with who I am'

Psychologists are trained to help with these and other issues.

How a psychologist might help you?

Psychologists can help you to:

- Make more sense of the situation
- Consider the impact of the illness on yourself and those around you
- Look at how to use your existing strengths in coping with things
- Develop new ways of coping and see how well they work in practice
- Work together to look at things from a different point of view
- Work on the best ways for you to communicate with the people around you
- Find ways of feeling more in control
- Deal better with distressing thoughts and feelings

You will be working together with your psychologist on solving your problem. It is not a matter of them simply telling you what to do. You will need to be actively involved in your therapy.

What will happen at your appointment?

You can be referred by anyone in your health or social care team, or you can contact us directly on the numbers at the end of this leaflet.

If you are not sure whether this is right for you, you could discuss it with a member of your care team, or ask to speak to one of us.

If you would like to go ahead, the psychologist will either send you an appointment letter or telephone you.

Patient Information

What will happen at your appointment?

- You will usually be seen at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital or Cheltenham General Hospital. Home visits or appointments in other settings can **occasionally** be arranged when appropriate.
- Appointments usually last up to an hour.
- At the first meeting, you and the psychologist will identify what your needs are, and decide what kind of help will be of most use.
- You are welcome to bring a family member or friend with you.
- You may be seen for a number of follow up appointments; this will depend on your difficulties. When you are ready to be discharged, we will contact the person who referred you and your GP, who can re-refer you in the future.

Risks

Sometimes talking can make people aware of how distressed they are. This can be uncomfortable. A talking approach is not for everyone.

Alternatives

You may want to consult your GP who may recommend some other care, or prescribe medication, if needed.

Trainee psychologists

From time to time trainee psychologists will be involved in your psychological care. This might mean you work with a trainee psychologist under the close supervision of a qualified psychologist. If this is offered to you and you do not wish to be seen by a trainee, please let us know. This will not affect your care in any way.

**Patient
Information****Will our discussions be confidential?**

- Yes. We do communicate our understanding of your problem to other professionals directly involved in helping you. However, you may be discussing very personal matters with us and we will respect a request not to pass on details, subject to the requirements of the law. Psychologists will have to make a disclosure to the authorities if they hear about a serious criminal act, or a serious issue involving the safety or wellbeing of a child or adult.
- Your psychologist will take notes during or after your sessions; these are kept securely and confidentially.
- Psychology case notes are kept separately from general hospital medical records. Correspondence to your doctors will be filed within the general medical records.

Contact information**Psychology Service**

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 8523

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:00pm

Telephone messages can also be left. Please note that messages may not be picked up each working day.

Psychology Service

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 3443

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:00pm

Telephone messages can also be left. Please note that messages may not be picked up each working day.

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