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A workshop on the development and use of effective written health information to enhance self-management skills in long term conditions

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Background

Most health care systems require that patients are able to read. Low literate patients have higher levels of depression, anxiety and mortality rates than those with higher literacy levels (Walker et al 2007, Gordon et al 2002). Patient education is a well-used strategy in attempting to increase self-management skills. Written health information is integral to this process. However much of the published health education literature is produced at reading levels that are too high to be understood by the majority of patients (Chapman and Langridge 1997). Understanding the components of inclusive written patient education and how to implement this appropriately is key to occupational therapists' role in developing self-management skills for individuals with long-term conditions.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the workshop participants will be able to

1. understand why, when & how to use written patient information
2. using standardised tools, critique written information in terms of
 - i. readability
 - ii. layout
 - iii. design
3. develop skills in creating and evaluating written information

Learning and Teaching methods

A problem-based approach underpins this workshop. The workshop will explore the concepts of facilitating patient education through the use of written material. The theoretical underpinning to effective patient education will be presented with specific research evidence from the rehabilitation literature. Participants will be asked to bring examples of their own experiences and written educational materials that they regularly use with patients to contextualise their learning. (Participants' education leaflets need not be in English as the standardised tools can be applied across languages). The workshop will be experiential and participants will analyse written material that is familiar and meaningful to them using standardised approaches; the FOG (Gunning 1969) and the SMOG (McLaughlin 1969) indexes. Through selected activities participants in small groups, will discuss the components of effective patient centred written information. They will be able to conduct a needs analysis to justify the appropriate use of written material for patient education and will develop the skills to recognise the importance of patient opinion in the development and evaluation of any written health information.

Participants = 30