HPB Support Group

Background and Aims

The Greater Manchester HPB Support Group was first established in 2017 by the Stockport NHS Foundation Trust HPB Cancer Nurse Specialist team. It was recognised that there was little psychological support available for patients diagnosed with an HPB cancer in the Greater Manchester area.

Maggie's was identified as an appropriate setting due to it being a non-clinical environment, where patients would feel more at ease. The group is led by the Cancer Nurse Specialist, supported by a Maggie's counsellor. By hosting meetings at Maggie's, patients can access peer support as well as complementary support services available at the centre.
The aims of the group link to the Greater Manchester Cancer Alliance Metastatic Strategy, which focuses on collaborative working
and personalised care, and to the national cancer plan for England, particularly around rare and less common cancers, designing cancer care around people's lives, and empowering patients.
The group puts patients at the centre, enabling them to feel empowered and confident to reach out for the support most appropriate to them









Methods

Although the group is informal and patient-led, where a specific need is identified, the Cancer Nursing team arranges a specialist to address the group. Previous input has included the specialist dietitian team at Manchester Foundation Trust, talks from Pancreatic Cancer UK (PCUK), and chemotherapy nurses.

Most recently, the Cancer Nurse Specialist teams from Stockport NHS Foundation Trust and Tameside General Hospital joined forces to collaborate, now co-chairing the group to ensure a specialist nurse is always present. This partnership allows patients from both trusts to access beneficial support and services they may not have been able to access previously.



Results

The collaboration between the two trusts has strengthened the group's capacity and reach, ensuring consistent specialist nurse attendance. A Christmas wellbeing event was organised for patients, incorporating a complementary lunch, party games, a sound bath, and access to services at Gorton Monastery. The group has facilitated links between patients and specialist services across dietetics, oncology nursing, and charitable organisations such as PCUK.



Feedback from our patients

"TThe meetings are informal and it is much easier to get advice on day to day issues as the nurses have far more knowledge and experience of your illness than most GPs. At each meeting we are encouraged to share our current situation and current treatments. Hearing from other people who are further along their journey with the illness can be encouraging and sometimes humbling.

For others who are newly diagnosed we are able to encourage them with the progress we have made. The specialist nurses are also able to liaise on our behalf with doctors, hospitals and other agencies in a far better way than would be available to us through normal channels. The help and encouragement we have received at these meetings has been invaluable and we are very grateful to the HPB nurses for their continued support and for facilitating these meetings.
" - Adele and Iain, patient and wife.

"Thank you both so much for a lovely lunch... it was really so wonderful to catch up with you both after such a long time, both looking very well and having lost none of your enthusiasm for care."

Conclusion

The Greater Manchester HPB Support Group demonstrates the value of collaborative, patient-centred care for those living with an HPB cancer diagnosis. By partnering with Maggie's and bringing together two NHS trusts, the group provides access to specialist expertise, peer support, and wellbeing services in a welcoming, non-clinical setting.
The group empowers patients to take an active role in their own care, supporting them to live well beyond their diagnosis — reflecting both local and national cancer strategy priorities