

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Frailty Matters to Me: involving older citizens as person centred co-coaches

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Introduction

The number of older people living with frailty is increasing. Awareness of frailty and capability to identify and manage frailty are essential for all who work with older people in any setting. This paper presents the learning from involving older citizens in a combined coaching and educational programme for community nurses in one NHS Board in Scotland.

Methods

Ethical approval was granted to recruit older citizens as co-coaches in a three phase exploratory qualitative study. Recruitment was facilitated via local NHS public involvement officer and co-coaches were fully involved in the design and delivery of the programme.

Results

Two older people with lived experience of frailty were recruited as co-coaches to work alongside nine community nurse participants. The experience shared by the co-coaches in face to face and virtual sessions added an innovative and person centred dimension to the interactive learning experience. The citizen co-coaches reported they gained useful insights into the current challenges facing community nurses and integrated teams. Iterative and interactive dialogue between nurses and co-coaches informed co-production of the Frailty Matters House, an educational framework to support integrated teams caring for people living with frailty.

Discussion

The global pandemic prompted a shift from face to face to a virtual learning platform. The project officer had an important role to ensure the emotional, physical and digital support needs of the citizen co-coaches were addressed. Their involvement enabled the community nursing participants to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to live with frailty and the impact this can have on the lives of older people, their carers and families. This dialogue offered valuable insights and highlighted the conditions necessary to empower and support individuals with frailty to manage their conditions and live the lives they want to live.

Conclusion

The involvement of older persons with lived experience of frailty was critical for the successful development and delivery of an innovative, person—centred coaching and educational programme. Participation by citizen co-coaches in co-design and co-delivery resulted in deeper empathy, improved skills and a meaningful educational framework for frailty informed by lived experience.

Genuine co-production is possible with older persons living with frailty but requires mutual respect, attention to their emotional and physical wellbeing, and support to enable digital participation.

Lessons Learned

- Involving older people from the outset ensured inclusion of lived experience of frailty and created educational tools that were meaningful to older persons and clinicians
- Creating an ethos of mutual respect and openness enabled older persons and professionals to listen and learn together
- Recruitment of participants with lived experience of frailty was challenging despite using local public involvement processes.
- Support for the emotional, physical and digital needs of the older citizen co-coaches was essential.

Limitations

- Participants were recruited from one discipline and in one NHS Board area in Scotland.

Suggestions for future research

The Frailty Matters House and involvement of citizen co-coaches in delivering a combined coaching and educational programme should be tested with other disciplines across wider health and care systems.