



**Five week cancer awareness course participants**  
**November 2013**



## **Five Week Cancer Awareness Course 2013**

### **The Course was run by:-**

**Cancer Specialist Educator – Debbie Logan**

**Cancer Campaign in Suffolk**

39 – 41 Elm Street

Ipswich

Suffolk

IP1 2AB

Tel 01473 211884

### **The Course was organised and funded by:-**

**Clem Turner**

**Caribbean and African Community Health Support Forum**

1 Cornhill, Ipswich

Suffolk, IP1 1 DD

Tel: 01473 233844

### **The venue and hospitality was provided by:-**

**Barbara**

**Live Well**

Adelphi House, 8 Turret Lane, Ipswich

Suffolk IP4 1DL

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### **The course was attended by:-**

A total of 13 participants engaged with the 5 week Cancer Awareness course

6 males and 7 females

3 Portuguese males

2 British (1 male, 1 female)

8 Afro Caribbean (2 males and 6 females)

### **Course dates:-**

Held Fridays 11 – 1pm

Week one 15<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Week two 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013

Week three 29<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Week four 6<sup>th</sup> December 2013

Week five 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013



Cancer Campaign  
in Suffolk  
*Reducing the fears*

**LiveWellSuffolk**  
Steps to a healthier future



## **Attendance**

This varied from week to week. Four of the group attended every week. Others missed one or two due to personal problems. There was always a minimum of eight attending.

## **Course content**

All participants took part in discussions and all asked lots of questions and some shared personal experiences. Some topics raised more discussion than others, so although all areas of the intended course were covered, I was flexible in my delivery and rearranged the itinerary to meet the participants needs.

## **Time keeping**

This proved difficult, as most weeks some people would arrive up to fifteen minutes late, delaying the start of the course. One week two people were 3/4hr late and they missed the one part of the course that they really wanted to hear. People were keen to leave on time so sometimes I struggled to get all the information across, although I did achieve it.

## **Information provided**

Everyone was provided with a file with details about the three supporting organisations, the courses aims and the course details. My intention was that each week I would handout relevant leaflets for them to add to their file.

## **Reviewing the course**

In week one I began by asking everyone to complete a form that would give me an indication of people's present knowledge of cancer. A total of eleven questions were asked with them indicating on a score of 1 – 5 their knowledge of cancer 1 being low, 5 being high. I asked them to complete a similar form after the day asking to rate their hopefully increased knowledge. The scores varied and I am not entirely sure that people fully understood what was being asked of them. I changed the form in week two to asking a question and asking them to comment rather than rating. Again there were some that found this difficult. So after discussion with Clem we decided that just reviewing at the end of each session would be a more effective measure. This worked better.



**Week 1****The basics about cancer**

- An introduction to Cancer Campaign in Suffolk, the Afro Caribbean group and Livewell
- What is cancer?
- What causes cancer?
- Who is more likely to develop cancer?
- How much of cancer is genetic?
- Can cancer be prevented?
- Dispelling the myths

**Week 2****Provided basic knowledge, signs and symptoms and treatment of some of the more common cancers that relate to both male and females**

- What screening is available?
- The treatment process
- Breast cancer
- Bowel cancer
- Mouth/ oesophageal cancers
- Lung cancer
- Ovarian cancer
- Cervical cancer

**Week 4****Provided basic knowledge, signs and symptoms and treatment of cancers that relate specifically to males or females.**

- Prostate cancer
- Testicular cancer
- The 3 week symptom diary
- Medication
- Diet
- Talking to your GP about health issues
- What to do if symptoms persist and no one is listening to you

**Week 4**

- Skin cancer
- Blood Cancers
- Lymphomas
- Sickle cell disease (at the request of participants)

**Week 5****Support services available****Keeping healthy and review**

- The Cancer Information Centre at the Ipswich Hospital
- Support Groups
- Psychological support
- Complementary therapies
- Financial support
- Available courses
- Support for family, carers and friends
- A healthy living plan
- Review of the course

## **Feedback**

Statements made by candidates over the five weeks, when reviewing each week

- Men bury their heads in the sand, so really important to ensure men understand the importance of knowing what to look out for and when to seek help.
- Two people said they would defiantly check things out now if they had niggling symptoms
- Now understand that it is important to know what is normal for each person, and that may vary from person to person.
- Knowing that breast cancer could happen to them
- Clearer about what ages are more at risk of getting certain cancers
- Now aware of the nine signs of breast cancer, very surprised it was more than just lumps
- Now know that if you are over seventy, you can self refer for mammograms.
- Now understand the importance of screening, now won't overlook the bowel screening
- Will check her breasts monthly now as she understands the importance of early detection
- Will not now be ashamed of my own body.
- Now understands how to protect skin, didn't think a dark skin was a problem
- Will invest in sun tan lotion and use it regularly
- Will go back to her Drs re a mole that is changing.
- Didn't know before there were different types of skin cancers
- Really now understand the importance of protecting themselves from the direct sun
- Found the simple explanation of blood cancers really helpful
- Appreciated the additional information about sickle cell anaemia
- Will now be more aware of the dangers of the UV rays from the sun
- Learnt more about protecting children from the sun whilst at School
- Learnt a lot more about leukaemia, feel they could recognise the signs better now
- Now understand better how our cells work and how they can be damaged by our lifestyle
- Have "enjoyed" learning about all the different cancers
- The information on testicular cancer was really useful
- Understanding what is different regarding healthy and what shouldn't be ignored
- Found the three week symptom diary information really helpful
- Useful to hear more about prostate cancer and how to be more proactive
- Didn't realise that alcohol was a poison and could do so much damage
- Didn't realise drinking alcohol could increase your risk of some cancers
- Didn't realise how much eating a healthy diet could reduce the risk of cancer
- Surprised by the range of cancers and how they are all individual

## Last day review of the whole five week course

- I will now do regular self checks and I know what I am looking out for
- The information was explicit enough
- The use of humour helped get the messages across and made the course enjoyable
- Found the course very interesting
- It was all pitched at just the right level
- It was good to have the subject told as it was
- The timing, location and it being a five week course worked ok
- Parking was an issue for some
- Would like notes on the topics
- The fact that one of the candidates stayed awake for the whole course!!
- It would be good to have more people
- Would like a certificate for attendance **ACTION**
- Would like to meet up again after Christmas **ACTION**
- One person was able to provide support with much more confidence to a neighbour recently diagnosed with cancer
- Talked to their Grandson about testicular cancer
- One candidate was going to stop drinking alcohol as his little boy has cancer, so feels he can do something really important to reduce his risks of developing cancer or other chronic illnesses
- Several said they had talked to friends about the signs of breast cancer
- Several said they would defiantly write down symptoms before visiting the Dr and take it with them to use during their consultation
- One gentleman works at Age UK and now has far more knowledge to sign post people for the right support
- One gentleman realised how his many medications could be causing symptoms and needs reviewing. He will make an appointment ASAP
- Medication was talked about a lot, it seems many were just stopping or changing their tablets without understanding what they were for
- One lady had cancer and says she now understands it much more, which was a relief for her
- People felt more confident to support others, not so fearful of cancer
- Learnt a lot about skin damage and what moles need checking out
- Given people confidence
- Would now go to the GP with more confidence
- Candidates were disappointed the course had ended
- Would like a further course on medication **ACTION**

## **Summery from Cancer Specialist Educator**

Overall I felt the course went really well, I thoroughly enjoyed delivering to such a lovely group of people, all who seemed to really embrace learning about cancer and were keen to help themselves and have a better lifestyle.

I felt disappointed with myself that I had not understood about some of the difficulties people had with their written skills. I feel I would have given more thought to how I collated feedback. I also quickly learnt that many had little interest in taking leaflets, probably for the same reason. There was a request that at the end that notes would be given on the course, having given this further thought, this would be a timely task given that my course was delivered via a power-point, mainly in picture format and I am really unsure how many people would benefit from them.

Time keeping was a real issue for me, people were often drifting in five – ten minutes late as they had buses to catch or were walking and the weather was sometimes very wet. By the time people had a drink made we were often twenty minutes late starting, which meant I was always pressed for time. People needed to leave on time for the same reasons as above. If I had started it would have meant people would miss out on vital information. To solve this problem in the future maybe a start time should include a twenty – thirty minute social coffee time at the start.

I felt the location worked well, being centrally based and having the support from Live Well worked well.

Over the five weeks I covered a lot of information, which I wasn't sure if it would be too much to take in, but it seemed to work well. I think different people had more interest in certain cancers than others, but as we only spent a maximum of about twenty minutes on each cancer people were able to keep focused.

The important messages were continually repeated i.e. many cancer symptoms are the same as everyday known illnesses, the difference being that most everyday symptoms will show signs of improvement within five to ten days. With a disease like cancer the symptoms will persist. So the vital message was when any symptoms that are not normal for you last for longer than a week, make a diary note of the date, the next week tweak your lifestyle to try and reduce the problem, keeping a diary of what you have altered and the results. Many symptoms will respond and improve. If however the problem has shown no signs of improvement at the end of the second week, keep a more detailed diary of the actual problem and do not change any lifestyle. At the end of the third week if still no signs of improvement are seen, make an appointment with your GP and take the diary with you. This does not mean someone has cancer but the GP has a far more accurate picture of what is happening and can evaluate the problem and order the right tests. If the problem turns out to be cancer, you will know that there is a much greater chance that the cancer has been recognised in the early stages and is more likely to be curable, with less invasive treatment needed.

The important message about early detection of cancer leading to a less invasive treatment plan and a higher likelihood of a cure really hit home.

Much discussion took place about how living a healthy lifestyle could reduce the risk of cancer developing. Many, if not all made decisions about how they would change some aspects of their life to be healthier. Together we drew up a long list of what living a healthier lifestyle meant and how easy it was to alter life to have a healthier future.

I ensured the important message of each person with cancer was an individual was understood. I emphasised that everyone responds slightly differently to treatment; each cancer will develop slightly differently and show signs and symptoms slightly differently. So no one should ever compare one cancer with another even though there maybe some similarities. There are different types of breast cancer, different types of bowel cancer for example.

Throughout the course many questions were asked and discussions talk place thereafter. Sometimes people would share personal stories that would emphasise the message I was presenting, which was really helpful.

I was able to reassure people regarding many of the misunderstandings and myths relating to cancer, which people found very reassuring.

Apart from requesting information on Sickle Cell Anaemia, we didn't deviate off the subjects on the agenda.

Questions relating to medication kept coming up throughout the course. There is certainly a need for a further workshop on this subject. People were confused over how to take their medication. I had to stress the importance of not self managing medication. I was really surprised how many did not understand what their medication was for. Some would stop a medication if they had symptoms that they put down to being a consequence of taking a specific medication, without consulting with their GP. I pointed people in the direction of the pharmacist and explained that regular medication reviews were important and could be carried out by the pharmacist as well their GP.

The session on screening and self examination for testicular and breast cancer was well received, having the breast vest and models helped the demonstration and allowed people to try and feel what lumps might feel like. Some people admitted they had ignored the invitation to take part in screening because they did not understand the importance. Only one person admitted to carrying regular breast checks but then did not really know what she was looking out for.

The men were particularly interactive during the prostate cancer session; this is a complicated cancer to understand as the treatment is so varied. As Afro-Caribbean males are more at risk and likely to have symptoms earlier in life this was an important cancer for them to be aware of.

We had a really interesting interactive session on consultations with GP's. Several felt they were not listened too enough, some wouldn't consider returning to their GP if symptoms persisted, as they felt they would be wasting their GP's



time. Most agreed that maybe they weren't being specific enough as to what the problems were. We revisited the three week symptom diary as a useful tool to use for all appointments.

Skin cancer was cancer that most felt they were not at risk of at all. Although it is true being a natural dark skin they are much less at risk, they are defiantly not immune from developing skin cancer, also being dark skinned it is often harder to notice when moles are changing. I had lots of positive feedback on this session.

Most if not all reported passing on information they had learnt on the course to family and friends.

For the past three years I have been providing a number of different cancer awareness talks to a variety of different age groups across schools, community and business groups. The impact of this five week course exceeded my expectations. All of the group were really keen to learn, every person went away from the course more in control of their health and enjoyed the experience, this is defiantly a course I would offer to other groups in the future.

**Report by**  
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