

Expert Patients Programme

self-management
– moving from
patient to person

What is the Expert Patients Programme?

The Expert Patients Programme (EPP) is an NHS self-management programme delivered by lay people for anyone living with any long term health condition(s). Groups of 8-16 participants, with a mix of different conditions, meet over six weekly sessions and are led through a structured course by trained tutors who are also living with a long-term condition. Each session (lasting two and a half hours) looks at ways to manage the effects of their long-term condition such as:

- dealing with pain and extreme tiredness
- coping with feelings of depression
- relaxation techniques and exercise
- healthy eating
- communicating with family, friends and health professionals
- planning for the future.

There is a strong emphasis on participants setting practical, achievable goals which are monitored each week. Core skills such as problem solving, decision making, being resourceful and behavioural changes are also developed throughout the six weeks.

The EPP does not provide health information or treatment, nor does it look at clinical needs. The aim of the EPP is to give participants the confidence to take responsibility for their own care, while also encouraging them to work in partnership with health and social care professionals.



“The EPP course has made me realise that I can have some say over my pain and not let it dictate my life”

How does the EPP help patients?

People who have taken part in an EPP course have reported that it has helped them to:

- manage their condition and treatment more effectively together with healthcare professionals
- feel confident and more in control of their life
- develop effective relationships with healthcare professionals
- be realistic about the impact of their condition on themselves and their family
- use their skills and knowledge to lead a full life
- take their medication effectively by reporting problems when they arise

What are the benefits for health professionals?

EPP courses are designed to run alongside treatments provided by healthcare professionals. The EPP course helps people develop the skills and confidence needed to manage their condition better on a daily basis, making them less dependant on health and social care programmes. Internal monitoring of participant questionnaires has highlighted some of the benefits EPP courses can have for patients and healthcare professionals. The comparison of before and after measures showed that 4-6 months after completing the course:

- GP consultations decreased by 7%
- Outpatient visits decreased by 10%
- A&E attendances decreased by 16%
- Pharmacy visits increased by 18%

“The course helped me enormously and has changed my life”

National EPP achievements so far

- 21,000 people with long-term conditions have attended an EPP course
- Course availability is increasing each year to become mainstreamed by 2008
- There is an EPP team based in each SHA geographical area (contact details at www.expertpatients.nhs.uk/contact)
- Specialist courses are being piloted for parents and young people
- Bi-lingual tutors are being trained to access non English speaking communities
- Courses have successfully been delivered in prisons as well as with marginalised and ethnic minority groups
- A web based course is being trialled in 2005 for people who are housebound or prefer not to attend groups.

How can patients be referred to an EPP course?

If you know a patient who would benefit from an EPP course, you can either give them the information and encourage them to contact their local EPP team or you can refer them to your local EPP contact. To find out who your local EPP contact is please visit www.expertpatients.nhs.uk and click on ‘find a course’. You will be able to use the interactive map to find out about the courses being run in your area.



Useful resources

For more information about the Expert Patients Programme and self-management you may find the following resources useful.

Expert Patients Programme website – www.expertpatients.nhs.uk

Department of Health website – www.dh.gov.uk/selfcare

Long-term Medical Conditions Alliance (LMCA) website – www.lmca.org.uk

Supporting Expert Patients: How to develop lay led self-management programmes for people with long-term condition medical conditions. Can be downloaded from www.lmca.org.uk

The NHS Improvement Plan can be downloaded from www.dh.gov.uk

National Standards, Local Action: Health and Social Care Standards and Planning Framework (2005/6-2007/8). Can be downloaded from www.dh.gov.uk