

EMPOWERING INPATIENTS WITH DIABETES



Suraiya Chowdhury, Diabetes UK Healthcare Engagement Officer, talks to **Paula Johnston** (above), one of the Tomorrow's Leaders programme alumni, about the inpatient insulin administration initiative she has piloted

Enabling people with diabetes to self-administer their insulin while in hospital can improve patient satisfaction, ensure they receive insulin at the appropriate times and doses, and reduce demands on nursing staff. The team at University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust (UHS) has developed an electronic review process to assess whether patients are able to self-administer insulin and to ensure that their suitability to do so is continually reviewed. This process has been piloted in four wards with great success and is due to be rolled out across the Trust¹.

Paula Johnston, who is a diabetes specialist nurse at UHS, was a finalist in the Nursing Times Awards 2017 for leading on this work. She

shared her top three lessons taken from the piloting of this project at the Tomorrow's Leaders programme, Diabetes UK's leadership programme for DSNs and dietitians:

1 Communication is key

This project involved liaising with various teams – teams Paula or most DSNs in any other circumstances would not ordinarily work with, such as procurement staff. Paula highlighted how beneficial it was for her to understand some of the challenges faced by other teams. Communication was key, particularly in keeping all parties involved, so that they were aware of what was going on and to be able to tackle those challenges.

2 Empower your team

While involving lots of people can be challenging, it's important to recognise the skills and specialties

of each team, individual members and patients. To achieve success in any programme that involves a change in the culture of how care is delivered, it's crucial to involve the right people and to utilise their skills and knowledge. This also includes the patients – people with diabetes who manage their condition by themselves on a daily basis often have a good understanding of their needs. The more people are inspired, empowered and involved in improving services, the more likely you are to succeed.

3 Don't let the enormity of a task put you off

The task at hand can often seem enormous, but a good starting point is to make small changes – one at a time – and incorporate them into your day job. Take on a project that you're excited about and remember the end goal – it's all for the benefit of the patient. Get other colleagues excited and involved, and surround yourself with the right team. Finally, have the confidence and just go for it!

Speaking of the Tomorrow's Leaders programme, Paula said that she found it really useful to network with people outside of the area, develop her leadership skills and grow in confidence.

i If you're interested in the programme, go to www.diabetes.org.uk/tomorrows-leaders

Reference 1 Johnston P and Newland-Jones P (2017). Insulin self-administration: development of an assessment tool to empower hospital inpatients with diabetes. *Journal of Diabetes Nursing* 21 (5); 174–178

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