



Acutely Aware

A joint project of
RuralAccess Wimmera
Wimmera Health Care Group
& Western District Health Service



Origins of the project

Need and opportunity

- Experiences of people with a disability in hospital –
 - communication and empowerment matter
- RuralAccess and Monash medical students
 - Creating conversations, sharing experiences
- Wimmera Advocacy Connections Project
 - disability awareness training



Rationale

- Needs and experiences of people with a disability are those of all community members
- Extra degree of disempowerment for people with a disability in hospital
- New policy directions in the health sector `Doing it With Us, Not For US`



Project partners

- WDHS & WHCG
 - Role of partners
- Community trainers
 - Skills and background
- Pilot stage of Acutely Aware
 - 1 cohort of 8 staff from each organisation
 - 3 x half hour sessions



Projected Outcomes

- Acute health staff will receive good practical advice **relevant to their needs and will receive a Certificate of Completion for the training course**
- Health Service Organisations will be assisted in **developing a culture of community and individual consultation in keeping with the requirements of the policy document 'Doing it with us, not for us'.**
- People with a disability will benefit from **greater understanding of their needs and from a positive, wholistic approach to their health care that recognizes their status as a valued patient (see the person, not the disability).**
- All Acute Health patients **will benefit by interacting with staff who are more aware of the inherently marginalizing and disempowering experience of being a hospital patient.**



10,000 Acts of kindness

Stephen Jay Gould (**palaentologist and social commentator**)

To paraphrase:

We remember the bad experiences because they are exceptional – we forget the 10,000 acts of kindness (or at least neutrality) in between

Our dilemma

How do you pre-empt the bad experiences in hospital for people with a disability?



The process...I

- Building the modules
 - Keep it simple
 - Keep it real
 - Keep the message about empowerment
 - The evaluation dilemma...
 - Base-line surveys



The process...II

- Market testing (the pilot)
 - Groups of 8 staff from each organisation
 - Staff drawn from across whole range of activity in each organisation
 - Delivery of the first sessions
 - The evaluation dilemma... Part 2!
 - Session evaluation



The process...III

- Re-building the modules!
 - Responding to session feedback
 - Keep it in context
 - Wider policy and accustomed procedure
 - Keep thinking about the audience
 - ‘communication works two ways’
 - ‘we feel like we are being scolded’
 - ‘this is great, we really need this – keep going’
 - Keep it real
 - focus, focus, focus on the acute setting...



The process...IV

- The final product... for now!
 - Three sessions
 - Policy context & Rationale
 - Understanding & Empowerment
 - Communication & Access
- The Evaluation dilemma... Part 3
 - Delivery different in each organisation – using that
 - Survey outcomes should still be useful
 - Ensuring the messages find their target



The Scoreboard

- We have learned
 - **Not to mix too many staff profiles in one group**
 - **To keep the message totally relevant to the group**
 - **To be more aware of how the message sounds**
 - **To allow more interaction in the learning**
- We have taught
 - **Awareness and understanding (we hope!)**
- **If we are lucky... we may have shifted the balance towards 20,000 acts of kindness...**



for more information...

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