



RCOT ISP award 2018 Samantha Pywell

Summary report

Samantha Pywell is currently working at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN). Sam has over 10 years experience in the NHS, has worked for the Care Quality Commission. Since early 2013, Sam has been researching into “Anxiety and stress: exploration of common discourses influencing community Occupational Therapy practices in palliative care”. This PhD is based at the University of Central Lancashire. Sam has received the RCOT Annual Award from the Institute of Social Psychiatry (ISP) three times. The 2018 ISP award has contributed toward tuition fees for this academic year, the final year of writing up the PhD.

This mixed methods study focused on the perspectives of Occupational Therapists on anxiety and stress in palliative care. It gave space for Occupational Therapists to articulate in their words their individual perspectives of patient anxiety and stress in clinical practice, what they thought patients needed and what their own understandings of anxiety and stress were. The study occurred in two phases: phase one (e-questionnaires) then phase two (telephone interviews). The results were analysed thematically using MaxQDA and WMatrix3 software, with use of linguistics, interpretivism and phenomenology. The results indicated there is a significant depth behind clinical reasoning due to the quantity of natural ambiguities around the use of anxiety and stress within communication. The results also illustrate how many ambiguities occur outside of the profession, but influence clinical reasoning as we address individual needs. These ambiguities presented as the natural complexities within communication which make us individual. It is therefore the understanding of these complexities which has the potential to provide better understanding of the individual in palliative care. Advanced communication training specific to the complexities and impact of these ambiguities, further research into why these ambiguities occur in certain contexts, and best practice guidelines are recommendations from this research. This PhD will be submitted and disseminated in 2019.

To fund this research, I have applied every year for funding and want to emphasise the support out there for Occupational Therapists considering a similar path. This award (and the previous two ISP awards) were toward tuition fees for the PhD. In addition, I have also received support from The Elizabeth Casson Trust and The Constance Owens award for tuition fees. The RCOT specialist section for palliative care has also been immensely supportive, and I would like to thank all participants who took part in the research. Without this support, I would not have been able to get this far.

During the past 5 years I have had two children and changed career pathway from working in the NHS to academia at UCLAN. I strongly believe the part-time route has been immensely beneficial in being able to connect a clinical issue with growing and developing skills in academia. This research originated from my experience as a community occupational therapist in the NHS, and I intend to disseminate the research findings fully after the viva.