

Running an affiliated group: keeping the momentum going



Francesca Robinson talks to **Sally King**, *PCRS-UK affiliated Group Lead in Gloucestershire*

For Sally King, running a local PCRS-UK affiliated group is a professionally fulfilling role - it not only supports enthusiastic practitioners who want to extend their knowledge, it also impacts on patient care. A respiratory specialist physiotherapist, who leads the Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust respiratory team, Sally organises three meetings a year for her group. On each occasion there is a therapists' meeting and a nurse meeting but often everybody in the multidisciplinary group tends to attend both sessions. Numbers are limited to 40 because of fire regulations at the venue where they meet and there is usually a full house.

Speakers are invited from a range of healthcare backgrounds and the challenge for Sally is to ensure that meetings remain relevant to the needs of attendees. The talks have changed a lot over the last two years. They used to be pitched at quite a specialist level with an academic focus, reflecting the needs of a very skilled respiratory workforce. But many of those well-trained practitioners have retired or moved on, and the people from general practice and the community attending the meetings are less experienced.

"Many people coming to our meetings now are not necessarily respiratory specialists although they see respiratory patients in their day-to-day work. We're trying to support them by focusing more on updating basic skills such as good inhaler technique, spirometry and how to carry out a holistic patient assessment. We will build the content back up when these practitioners become more experienced," says Sally.

A key success of the group has been its multidisciplinary make-up which Sally says gives attendees a better understanding of each other's roles and encourages multidisciplinary working and networking.

She finds the role rewarding because the practitioners who attend are always enthusiastic. "At the end of the day these people dedicate from 6 to 9 pm, after a day's work, to come to the event in their own time, knowing that there is probably no chance of getting that time back from their employer. I usually get emails after the meetings from people telling me what they found interesting and what they learned."

Sally also enjoys being group leader because she gets to meet practitioners from across the county who will often use her as a sounding board. "I get emails and calls in between meetings when people ask for your advice. But I like that because that's part of my role as a respiratory specialist. I'm there to provide education and support and it means I have an indirect impact on other people's patients - I just don't know who they are - that's the way I like to think of it."

She says that having PCRS-UK affiliation is really helpful because it gives the group professional recognition when the agenda is sent out and it also enables her to refer practitioners, who want to know more about improving patient care, to the Society's Practice Improvement Tools, workshops and conferences.

Local groups are a powerful means of educating and supporting health professionals in respiratory care and can also play a key role in influencing service delivery or commissioning. Local groups are very diverse in how they are set up and what they do and most evolve over time. At one end of the spectrum a group may be exclusively involved with education and support for practice nurses, whilst at the other it may be a multi-disciplinary group concerned with service delivery and commissioning - or it may be involved across the full spectrum. By understanding what the members are involved with, information and support can be tailored to their needs.

PCRS-UK welcomes affiliation with any local health professional groups interested in respiratory care: offering local groups enhanced credibility through being associated with a nationally recognised professional society. See <http://www.pcrs-uk.org/affiliation-pcrs-uk-0>.

If you are not already involved with a local group, PCRS-UK can help you set up and run a local respiratory group. We can provide our resource pack for local groups, put you in touch with an experienced group leader willing to share their experience and help you. See <http://www.pcrs-uk.org/local-groups>