

What is the Serious Illness Care Programme UK?

The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre is leading a pioneering new approach to the care of people with serious illnesses, starting in September 2016.

The Serious Illness Care Programme UK involves meaningful conversations between doctor and patient to identify what matters most to the patient, and their goals and their priorities as they look ahead to their treatment and care.

The conversations are carefully structured and documented, making sure they take place at the right time and in the right place for each patient.

The doctors involved receive full training and ongoing support in having these kinds of conversations with their patients.

Conversations can take place at any time following diagnosis with a serious illness.

The patient and their doctor can then agree an approach to care that meets the person's needs and wishes, enabling them to live their life the way they want and achieve their goals and priorities as far as possible.

Our mission:

Our mission is to improve the lives and personalise the care of all people with serious illness through meaningful conversations about their goals and priorities.

In simplest terms, it's about 'Better Conversations, Better Care'.



Led by:

The Serious Illness Care Programme UK is based on an approach developed by a US team led by world-renowned Dr Atul Gawande at Ariadne Labs in Boston, US.

The UK programme is being led by The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre NHS Foundation Trust in Merseyside with input from The Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute Liverpool and Ariadne Labs in Boston, US.

NHS England is funding a one-year pilot that will see some doctors in Airedale (Yorkshire) and Southend (Essex) receive training in having serious illness conversations with their patients in September 2016, as well as consultants at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre.

Doctors who complete the training will then begin having serious illness conversations with suitable patients and will receive ongoing education and support.

Evidence from the US shows that when patients have these conversations, they feel more in control of their illness, are less likely to experience depression or anxiety, and report a better experience of care generally. Doctors also say they feel more confident and better equipped for these conversations and that it enables them to deliver more personalised care.

The US research found that 86% of patients felt they benefited from the meaningful conversations they have with clinicians and more than 90% of doctors involved have changed their behaviour to adopt these kinds of conversations as part of their everyday clinical practice.

Feedback from patients and doctors at the UK sites will be carefully evaluated to see whether the Serious Illness Care Programme UK has similar benefits here and to explore how we can further improve and refine it.

It is hoped that the Serious Illness Care Programme UK will improve healthcare for people diagnosed with serious illnesses and mean patients feel happier, more in control and better able to achieve their goals and priorities during their illness. If successful, then in time we hope the approach will be adopted as standard practice across the NHS.

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The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre 
NHS Foundation Trust


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