

## **Making serious learning easy and fun at OHFT: Educational board games**

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### **Abstract**

Learning and knowledge sharing are of paramount importance at Oxford Health Foundation Trust which has recently embarked on a wide scale Apprenticeship program as well as other training courses. Oxford Health Library staff piloted the project with an initial purchase of three games and held a Games Day at Warneford Hospital along with other game events. For evaluation, we sent a survey to all team leaders who borrowed the games and phoned a sample of participants. We also collected comments from those attending drop in sessions and loan statistics from our library catalogue. Awareness of the games is evidenced by increasing usage statistics. Responses from the feedback survey were positive. These experiences demonstrate how interactive learning through board games provided by NHS Library Services can improve learning for patients and staff.

### **Introduction**

Educational board games are both a fun and serious way of learning and sharing knowledge. Research suggests that interactive learning stimulates discussion and has proven to benefit both the teacher and the learner. Board games have a history of use in therapeutic

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contexts and one of their great advantages is their ability to facilitate face to face interactions. These social interactions are assumed to enhance learning opportunities. Furthermore, board games are a means of creating more engaging interventions, which can improve knowledge, change real-world behaviors, and subsequently impact therapeutic outcomes (Gauthier, 2019).

Oxford Health Foundation Trust (OHFT) has recently embarked on a wide scale apprenticeship programme as well as offering an increasing number of further training programmes. In addition to the training requirements that these courses create, the increasing quantity of mandatory training required by health care organisations is resulting in growing pressures on individuals and teams who find it very difficult to comply due to staff shortages, fatigue, sickness, annual leave and time limitations, and as a result there are frequent cancellations, poor attendance and non-compliance. This situation is challenging for the organization since education of healthcare professionals and students is of the utmost importance to promote the adoption of best practices and to improve patient safety (Maheu-Cadotte, 2018).

Educational board games seem to provide an opportunity to help reduce these pressures by offering a way to integrate learning in innovative ways as well as helping to motivate staff and improve mandatory training compliance. For NHS libraries, they are also a useful resource which can help to widen access to and awareness of the role of library services in promoting the use of evidence-based information.

OHFT libraries therefore decided to run a pilot project to test this assumption beginning with the selection and acquisition of some educational board games from the company Focus Games, added them to the catalogue, and planned promotional activities to increase awareness and usage.

## Methods

### *Selection, promotion, raising awareness*

We looked for examples of other NHS Library Services that used the games and contacted one of those found, Newcomb Library, asking for any useful tips. We made an initial purchase of three games: Nutrition, Hydration, and Communication, selecting these to match current Trust priorities. We promoted them in the upcoming Nutrition and Hydration Awareness Week through the advice of our contacts in Older Adults and Eating Disorders Services.

To raise awareness across different sites, we offered a range of activities. As a ‘live launch’ of the games, we held a ‘Games Day’ at Warneford Hospital. Team leads, ward managers and some students were invited to attend a Games Day at the main library. Out of the 11 invitations sent out, 8 responded positively and brought along some team members as well. Around 15 people attended and played the games. This really helped in promoting the games as they shared their experiences with other managers and resulted in high demand of some of the games. We also held a drop-in session at Whiteleaf library in Aylesbury and promoted the games at several events held at various locations during Health Information Week, July 2018.

Ongoing promotion continues through the provision of displays in exhibition cabinets at Warneford Library, via social media (Intranet, Twitter, Blog and Yammer) (Figure 1). We wanted to promote the games as widely as possible, including within the library spaces. The use of different social media platforms was intended to promote our games to a wider audience quickly and easily, as many staff are community-based.

Team activities were monitored through the Internet and coordinators of team events were made aware of the games, offering their use during such meetings. Posters and leaflets briefly detailing each game were distributed to teams and individuals during inductions, training sessions and to users who visited the library.

Using recommendations from the clinical leads, tutors and teams, the library currently has acquired 14 board games. See photographs of the display cabinet containing the games (Figure 2) and a Games Day event itself (Figure 3).

For evaluation, we sent a survey to all team leaders who borrowed the games and phoned a sample of participants. We also collected comments from those attending drop in sessions and loan statistics from our library catalogue.

**BOARD GAMES! A BETTER WAY TO LEARN THAT'S FUN!**

Libraries are holding a games afternoon on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2-4pm where staff & students are invited to try out our new collection of educational games. Our interactive board games on topics such as sepsis, hydration and nutrition, safeguarding, communication and the care certificate are intended to help to make training memorable and effective and stimulate discussion. If you would like to come along and try them out, please email the library to book your place! All the games are available for loan through the library.

**BOARD GAMES DROP IN SESSION AT THE LIBRARY**

**A BETTER WAY TO LEARN THAT'S FUN!**

Libraries are holding a Games Drop in Session on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March 8:30am-4:00pm and we hope you can join us! After successfully holding a Games Day at the Library, Oxford teams are now using the games in their teams and so we thought it was fair to offer the same opportunity for our Buckinghamshire teams. Why not pop in and try our interactive educational board games on topics such as Sepsis, Hydration, Nutrition, Dysphagia, Safeguarding, Communication, Drug round, Infection control and the Care certificate which are intended to help to make training memorable and effective and stimulate discussion? For more information, email the library. All the games are available for loan through the library.

*Figure 1: Examples of Games Day Intranet/Twitter/Yammer announcements*



*Figure 2: Display Cabinet*



*Figure 3: Games Day*

### *Evaluation*

For evaluation, survey questionnaires were sent to the team leads of the eight teams based at Warneford, Abingdon and Aylesbury that used the educational board games. The survey had seven key questions centred on reasons for using the game, subjects, success/outcome and benefits/impact/changes, to show the criteria used to evaluate the games (Figure 4).

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|---|
| <p><b>Educational Board Games Survey</b></p> <p><b>This is a quick survey about your experience of using the educational board games.</b></p> <p><b>*Please answer all the questions if you have used the educational board games*</b></p> <p><b>Thank you for taking the time to give us your feedback.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Why did you use the game?</li><li>2. How did you use the game?</li><li>3. Who was involved?</li><li>4. How did it go?</li><li>5. Do you think it was successful?</li><li>6. How did you benefit from using the game?</li><li>7. How can it be used differently or better?</li></ol> |
|---|

*Figure 4: Survey*

During a follow up for unreturned surveys, telephone interviews were conducted. People preferred telephone interviews which just took under 15 minutes to complete. This resulted in getting good responses as people could be probed further or asked to explain unclear answers.

The comments received about the use of the games were categorized into two main headings: the general comments (Table 2) and impact comments (Table 3).

| <b>Comments</b>   | <b>Job Title/Role</b>            | <b>Team/Department</b>                    | <b>Number of People</b> |
|---|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| “We found the games really educational – and we are in-fact using them again today at another forum!”   | District Nurse<br>Team leader    | District Nurses                           | 60                      |
| “Very useful information found on the cards which was used to raise awareness of dysphagia to nursing staff, patients, friends and families -Swallowing Awareness Day”  | Speech and Language<br>Therapist | Adult Speech and Language Therapy Service | 40                      |
| “We used the game as part of team training and also as the Resus Team has an interest in Sepsis as it is one of the scenarios that we use in our assessments of Staff.” | Resuscitation<br>Officer         | Resuscitation Team                        | 15                      |
| “It was a funny way to learn which encouraged debate among team members”  | Ward Manger                      | Community Hospital                        | 16                      |
| “It was great fun and actually learnt some stuff. Thank you.”   | Learning<br>Environment<br>Lead  | Learning & Development                    | 8                       |
| “Very educational”  | Activity<br>Coordinator          | Inpatient Ward                            | 10                      |
| “An amazing resource, well done”  | Tutor                            | Recovery College                          | 6                       |
| “Very good and motivational fun way of learning”  | Tutor                            | Recovery College                          | 6                       |
| <b>Total</b>  |                                  |   | <b>161</b>              |

Table 2: General Comments from the survey and telephone interviews

| <b>Team</b>               | <b>Impact</b>  | <b>Game</b>  |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Community Hospital</b> | Can now manage sepsis and help reduce the cost incurred by the NHS   | Sepsis Game  |
| <b>District Nurses</b>    | Improved attendance to the study forums and knowledge sharing  | Communication Game<br>Nutrition Game<br>Hydration Game<br>Dysphagia Game |
| <b>Resus Team</b>         | Successful team training and team building/bonding. Made it easy to tell staff about assessment requirements by the Resus Team   | Sepsis Game  |
| <b>Rehabilitation</b>     | Raised awareness on maintaining adequate hydration for people with dysphagia to nursing staff, patients, friends and families. Made it easier to reach out to the wider team involved in patient care. | Nutrition Game<br>Hydration Game<br>Dysphagia Game                       |

*Table 3: Impact Comments from the team leaders*

## Results

Responses from the feedback survey showed the roles played by the board games in knowledge sharing and team building. A good turnout for games activities by different teams was reported. Players in different teams were from different specialties and levels. It was reported that junior staff members mixed well with seniors and discussions were free and open. Apprenticeship trainees were motivated and easily received shared knowledge. Patients and staff had a good rapport where teams were mixed. Loan statistics evidenced awareness of the games (Table 4).

| <b>Game</b>       | <b>Check<br/>out</b> | <b>Renewals</b> | <b>Reservations</b> | <b>Loan<br/>Total</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Sepsis         | 3                    | 2               | 3                   | 5                     |
| 2. Nutrition      | 4                    | -               | 2                   | 4                     |
| 3. Healthy Eating | 2                    | 2               | 2                   | 4                     |
| 4. Hydration      | 2                    | -               | 1                   | 2                     |
| 5. Communication  | 2                    | -               | -                   | 2                     |
| 6. Healthy living | 2                    | -               | 1                   | 2                     |
| 7. Safeguarding   | 2                    | -               | -                   | 2                     |
| 8. Home Safe      | 1                    | -               | 1                   | 1                     |
| 9. Dysphagia      | 1                    | -               | -                   | 1                     |
| 10. Traffic Life  | 1                    | -               | -                   | 1                     |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>20</b>            | <b>4</b>        | <b>10</b>           | <b>24</b>             |

*Table 4: Loan statistics collected over eight months*

Results indicated the impact the board games had in service delivery and promoting the library services. The different team that used the games had very positive responses about the games. Most teams found the games to be very educational, to have useful information, to be a fun way to learn, to encourage debate, to be very motivational and to be an amazing resource for learning. Feedback responses received were from the Adult Speech and Language Therapy service, District Nurses Team, Resus Team, Recovery College Tutors, Adult Inpatient Service and Learning and Development.

## **Discussion**

Our experiences demonstrate how interactive learning through board games provided by NHS Library Services can improve learning for patients and staff. The board games are a means of “creating more engaging interventions, which can improve knowledge, change real-world behaviors, and subsequently impact therapeutic outcomes” (Gauthier et al., 2019, p. 85). “Using board and card games to supplement more traditional means of learning could improve student

learning or recall of course material” (Ober, 2016). As evidenced by the repetitive use of games by the District nurses in their study forums, board games can help students learn in a fun and easy way. “Designing educational interventions to sustain the engagement of healthcare professionals and students is therefore critical to their effectiveness” (Maheu-Cadotte, 2018, para. 1).

“Board games have a history of use in therapeutic contexts. Aside from its engaging and entertaining characteristics one of the great advantages of using a board game is its ability to facilitate face to face interactions ... these social interactions are assumed to enhance learning opportunities” (Gauthier et al., 2019, p. 85). Playing board games has promoted knowledge sharing within teams as well as between staff and patients. Occupational therapists are now using the games to help the patients understand the reasons of healthy eating. One occupational therapist said it is now easy to reinforce a point without offending the patients despite their mental health conditions. For example, when taking patients out for meals and they want unhealthy foods, they can refer to the game played to make a healthy choice.

Educational board games are a fun but serious way of sharing knowledge, team building, and which can be used to positively promote NHS library services. The encouraging feedback received (Tables 2 and 3) and requests for more games (Table 1) indicate the positive impact the games have on knowledge sharing and patient care. The board games initially bought for the library users are now used even outside the library as well, after realizing the benefits. The library has promoted the use of educational board games during public functions like the Healthfest where Oxford Health staff and the public had the opportunity to get involved with wellbeing focused activities, engage with teams and partners, find out information about

services, training and employment options and the Trust Annual General meetings. The library had a stand at both events where people had the chance to play the games.

In the future, the library is planning a road show to reach out to the staff and patients in the community hospitals and to ask the Learning and Development team to make the use of games like Care Certificate mandatory. The Learning and Development team are holding a Lunch and Learn session based around the Board Games.

### **Conclusion**

This case study demonstrates that educational board games can be a real fun but serious way of sharing knowledge, team building, and which can be used to positively promote NHS library services. Further examples of use by other library services would be useful to evaluate the impact the use of board games on knowledge sharing and other educational outcomes for healthcare professionals.

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