

Excerpt from [Transforming Community Neurology, what commissioners need to know. Thames Valley Strategic Clinical Network 2016](#)

Tier: 3 (Self care)

Location: Cumbria

Provider: Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Service: Cumbria Headache Forum

### **Patient educational forum**

Cumbria has critically low neurology staffing levels and limited funding for special nursing support. Due to the need to find expertise within a growing population of patients with headache, Dr Jitka Vanderpol set up the Cumbria Headache Forum. The Forum runs as a quarterly large -scale meeting with open free access to all patients with headache. The forum is an educational platform developed to enable patients to take an active role in the management of their headaches and covers a regional population of 500,000.

Topics include self-management, relaxation techniques including visualization, mindfulness exercises, concepts of activity pacing, lifestyle balance, stress management and diet. Headache experts are invited to contribute from both Cumbria and across the country and include GPs with Special Interest (GPwSI), Headache Specialist Nurses, psychologist, physiotherapist and dietary nurses, chaired by Dr Vanderpol, a Consultant Neurologist with expertise in headache management.

This forum concept combines pharmacological treatment with multidisciplinary non-pharmacological treatment and self-management, creating a comprehensive program to increase the likelihood of successfully managing headaches in the community and provides support to patients who feel isolated and unable to cope alone with their condition.

### **'Added value'**

The forum requires very little investment, with a cost of around £3 per patient per session. Meetings are held for free in a local charity facility and invited speakers do not request a fee. A meeting attracts about 40 patients, some who have been seen initially in a neurology clinic or have read information about the forum in local newspapers or heard about it on BBC radio.

Formal evaluation is underway but the expected benefits of the forum are:

- Improved outcomes in patient care, experience and quality of life via education to promote self-management and a healthy lifestyle;
- Improved access to expert resources via optimising scarce physician time and free skill sharing of other team members;
- Expected reduced admission rate and A&E attendance of headache patients.

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