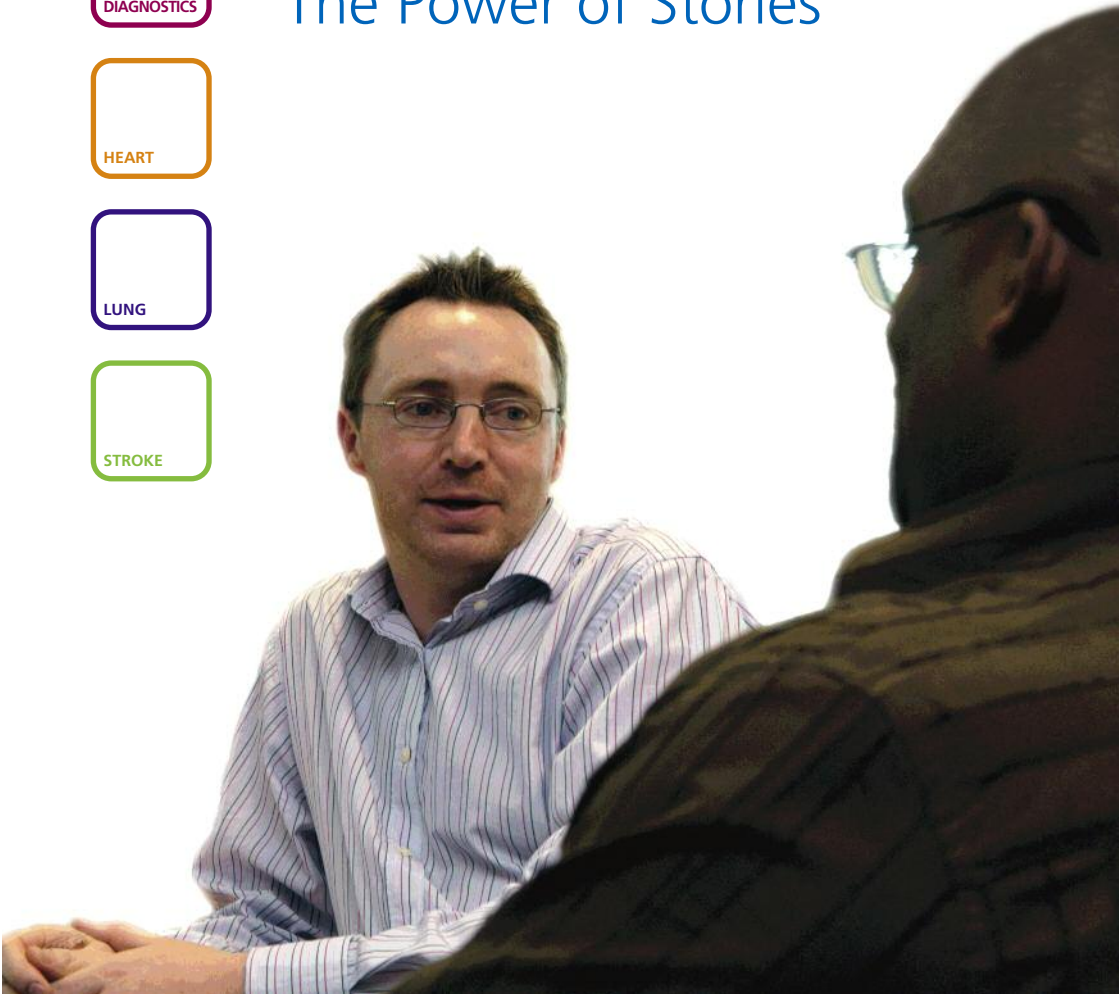




# Discovery Interview™ : Hints and Tips

## The Power of Stories



## Introduction

The Discovery Interview™ technique, a methodology, developed in 2000 by the CHD Collaborative has become widely used in the National Health Service (UK) as a service improvement tool and patient involvement mechanism. The Discovery Interview™ technique provides a new way to explore the impact of illness on patients' and carers everyday lives during each stage of their journey through the healthcare system.

Members of NHS staff specially trained in the Discovery Interview™ technique help the patient or carer to tell their story with as minimal amount of interruption as possible to avoid influencing their subject's story.

The technique allows the patient or carer being interviewed to talk about their illness/condition and its impact on their lives - issues that are important and relevant to them. After all this is one area where patients and carers really do know best.

Patients and carers are guided in telling their story by a framework called a spine, which is based on the key stages of their experience of illness. This triggers significant memories of how their health problems affect their everyday lives.

When clinical and service teams reflect on these stories linking what they learn with their own professional knowledge and experience they often 'discover' lots of information about how well the system has met their patient's and carers needs. Through a process of identification of issues and processes of concern teams can plan better ways to meet unmet needs through improving services.

The Discovery Interview™ is one of a number of possible approaches to involving patients and carers in improving care. They are particularly useful when clinical and other practice based teams want to directly learn about patients' needs and use this understanding to stimulate improvement ideas that they can test out in their services.

Other tools and techniques for involving patient's and carer's in change projects include:

- Focus groups
- Patient diaries
- Patient tracking
- Process mapping
- Critical incident techniques
- Questionnaires
- Semi structured interviews

## Effective Practice Points

The Discovery Interview™ work was evaluated in 2005 and identified the following effective practice points to support implementation:

### Implementing the Discovery Interview™

- Introducing the use of the Discovery Interview™ technique to an organisation requires executive level support, a process of embedding the work at a strategic level within the wider service improvement and patient and public involvement strategies
- Full and early engagement by key local stakeholders to identify teams along the patient pathway for sharing stories
- Administrative support is required to support the process
- Establishing strategic links at Trust managerial level and clinical team level
- Ensuring that service improvement activities take place after patient narratives have been gathered
- One story can result in a number of improvements from small changes in direct patient care on individual units, to influencing a change in policies throughout a whole hospital
- Significant effort 'selling' the approach to clinical teams can be beneficial: sharing stories from other areas can have a stronger impact than simply describing the technique

### Gaining ethical approval

- When considering using the technique you may be required to submit an ethics application - seek to ensure a member of staff with experience in submitting such applications is involved.
- Establishing good links with the local research and development (R&D) committee may help to facilitate this process

### Recruiting and training discovery interviewers

- To keep momentum and enable training in discovery interviewing be put into practice while fresh, ethical and research approval should be acquired before interviewer training takes place.
- The number of trained discovery interviewers should be fairly small as this help to ensure consistency in the team's approach.
- Interviewers should be drawn from a diverse range of backgrounds and disciplines

### **Recruiting patients and carers**

- To maximise the response to invitations for patients and carers to participate, it is a good idea to have a healthcare professional named on the recruitment pack so that the patient or carer can respond to a person with whom they are familiar
- Interviewees need to be clearly informed about the length of the interview before it begins, and the interviewers need to actively manage the interviews to prevent them lasting too long

### **Undertaking interviews**

- Interviewers undertaking transcription is not generally an effective use of time; ideally transcription should be done by an administrator or contracted out to a professional transcriber or trust department with spare capacity
- Setting up a database enables the effectiveness of the Discovery Interview™ to be demonstrated. It should include the interviews that take place, the stories that are shared and the service improvements that are put in place as a result
- Be prepared to work with clinical teams in supporting them to implement service improvements; leaving them to make the changes without support once the story has been shared may not be enough

## Why use the Discovery Interview™

- Patients and carers know what doctors and professionals cannot know about their personal experiences
- Patients and carers are the experts on their journey, healthcare professionals are the experts in delivering the service
- Carers tell us their personal experience of caring for someone as opposed to recounting the patient's experience.
- Patients are often satisfied with the outcomes of treatment but not necessarily with their experience
- The Discovery Interview™ helps to break through the 'gratitude effect'
- The Discovery Interview™ provides 'real-life' context in which teams can explore together and learn about meeting patient and carer needs
- The Discovery Interview™ can influence professional behaviour
- Most improvement activity is often focused around the processes in healthcare – this tool joins the expertise of the person and the healthcare system together to make improvements
- Healthcare professionals gain a better understanding of what happens to the patient across the whole pathway of care
- The approach enables healthcare providers to understand the experience of healthcare from the patient, carers and staff perspective

### Things to consider

- Teams identify issues from the stories which they develop improvements around
- Recruit patients across the whole patient journey and approach them personally
- Train interviewers from both clinical and non-clinical backgrounds
- Plan arrangements for sharing the stories and manage the interest generated in hearing these accounts

### Experience: adoption of the Discovery Interview™ technique

- Mental health
- Emergency care
- Intermediate care
- Stroke
- Critical care
- Non English speaking

### **NHS Improvement**

NHS Improvement's strength and expertise lies in practical service improvement. It has over a decade of experience in clinical patient pathway redesign in cancer, diagnostics, heart, lung and stroke and demonstrates some of the most leading edge improvement work in England which supports improved patient experience and outcomes.

Working closely with the Department of Health, trusts, clinical networks, other health sector partners, professional bodies and in partnership with charities, NHS Improvement supports clinical teams and managers through providing practical tools and techniques that transform, deliver and build lasting improvements across care pathways, making a difference to patients, services and staff.

### **The Discovery Interview™**

Use of the Discovery Interview™ as a new methodology commenced in 2001, piloted by Coronary Heart Disease Collaborative, which transferred to the NHS Heart Improvement Programme in April 2005.

The Discovery Interview™ is an established service improvement tool used by cardiac networks other specialist teams in the UK. In November 2005, the North West Multi Research Ethics Committee gave approval for this approach to be considered a mainstream service improvement methodology in the NHS (MREC 02/8/57).

### **For more details about the Discovery Interview™ contact:**

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