Social Work

for LARYNGETOMEEES

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LARYNGETOMEE CLUBS

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN!
Entering hospital for any form of treatment is a frightening prospect.

However, for people undergoing a laryngectomy this fear is increased by the knowledge that they have cancer and are to have mutilating surgery which will leave them with a permanent stoma and communication difficulties.

The role of the medical social worker can be summarised as follows:

1. **To assess the patient’s perception of this surgery and its implications.**

   The medical social worker will discuss with the laryngectominee their readjustment to daily living when they get home. They might have anxieties about their accommodation and feelings of isolation because of their lack of voice.

   If depression, anxiety and pain is a problem the medical social worker will refer back to her medical and nursing colleagues in the multidisciplinary team meetings – liaising also with the Macmillan clinical nurse specialists.
To provide support for family and carers at a time when they are having to come to terms with the illness of the person they care for and love and with future uncertainty.

The medical social worker will refer the patient on discharge to her colleagues in the community. The hospital social worker will work out a package of care for 4-6 weeks then her community social worker will take over, each patient is assessed on their own particular needs and passed back to the medical team when necessary.

To advise on welfare benefits. This is essential for a lot of laryngectomees and their families who need support and information to help allay their anxiety at the prospect of living on a reduced income.

The social worker should be able to advise on which forms to complete, to liaise with the D.S.S., arrange rehousing and apply to the MacMillan Fund or other organisations for grants for such essential items as liquidisers, emergency alarm systems etc.

The medical social worker can also fill in the forms for the people who have nobody to do this for them. When a person is recovering from a laryngectomy the last thing they wish to do is fill in forms.

During this period of trauma and upheaval, life for laryngectomees and their carers can be confusing and frustrating.

As a member of a multi-disciplinary team, the social worker can help to create an invaluable support framework for patients while they learn to cope with life on their own again.

For further information and for details of your local laryngectomy clubs, please contact:

The National Association of Laryngectomee Clubs (NALC)
- See address on back page.

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