

Get it Right - RIGHT SKILLS

The Royal College of Nursing's Campaign Dignity - at the heart of everything we do (RCN 2008) aims to both celebrate dignified care, and redress deficits in care. This is in response to recent research and media reports which have, sadly, identified significant dignity deficits in care. These deficits have resulted in embarrassment, distress and harm to patients and their families (see, Mencap 2007, Health Care Commission 2007, DHSSPS 2008).

Defining what is meant by 'dignity' is complex, and this is something which is supported by the accompanying literature (RCN 2007). The RCN believes that a superficial understanding of 'dignity' and its many facets will lead to superficial actions and outcomes. For this reason, the RCN commissioned and led a piece of work that aimed to both make sense of, and define 'dignity' in its broadest sense.

The scoping of the dignity campaign and the research conducted as part of the campaign activities pointed to three main factors that maintain or diminish dignity in care: the attitudes and behaviours of staff and others (People), the physical environment and the culture of the organisation (Place), and the nature and conduct of care activities (Processes).

Following on from the research a number of educational tools were developed by the RCN for individual members and health organisation to use in the promotion of dignity. Recently the RCN (2009) has also launched a guide to mainstreaming dignity into commissioning and planning practices.

Providing dignified care is an essential part of the Nursing and Midwifery Code of Conduct and the Royal College of Nursing believes that all its members should develop their understanding of dignity in care.

In aspiring to provide dignified care individuals must be reflective, engage in critical self-scrutiny and invite feedback from others regarding their performance. Attitudes and behaviours that diminish dignity must be challenged and therefore individuals should know how to influence change and report dignity deficits. All health care staff should be aware of the potential to enhance dignity by role modelling.



get it
right



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KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure the impact of dignity and care is considered in the establishment of all healthcare targets.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should invest in ending the practice of mixed sex wards in the NHS.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should monitor nurse patient ratios and skill mix in the NHS to ensure it is appropriate to the provision of dignified care.
- Nursing and other care staff should be involved in the design of healthcare environments in the NHS.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should ensure adequate standards of cleanliness and sufficient material resources (e.g. towels, gowns) to deliver dignified care in the NHS.
- Healthcare providers should make patient care their first priority.
- Healthcare providers should demonstrate respect for the dignity of staff.