



UNIT-3 Person-Centred Care

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the potential advantages of person-centred care
- ✓ Assist in the provision of person-centred care and the development of care plans
- ✓ Explain how person-centred care is beneficial to all parties involved – not just those receiving it

Unit 3

Person-Centred Care

AN Introduction to Person-Centred Care

It's no secret that the healthcare system of the United Kingdom is under more strain right now than it has ever been. To such an extent that it has become common for healthcare workers to focus disproportionately on the condition they're treating, rather than the person they're supporting.

This is where the difference between conventional care and person-centred care lies. Whereas traditional care concerns the treatment of a condition primarily or exclusively, person-centred care is more about fulfilling the wider needs of the patient *behind* the condition.

Increasingly, the UK's health and social care sector is demonstrating awareness of the importance of a person-centred approach to care and support. Research having suggested that when care and support is person-centred, the patient in question receives better quality care as a result.

Precisely why anyone who works in healthcare or provides care for anyone at any level should develop an understanding of the potential advantages of person-centred care, along with how it can and should be applied in a practical setting. Doing so will help ensure that those you care for receive the best possible care and enjoy enhanced quality of life in general.

What is Person-Centred Care?

The Care Quality Commission (the independent regulator of health and social care in England) outlines 13 fundamental standards of care, which all providers involved in the sector across the country are obliged to meet. Person-centred care is one of them, but what exactly does it mean?

Person-centred care is difficult to define in a formal sense, but generally involves providing care and support for patients that goes beyond the basic requirements of their condition. It means factoring their wants, needs, priorities, preferences and personalities into the equation, in order to subsequently tailor the care and support they are provided with in an appropriate way.

Importantly, person-centred care means acknowledging and respecting the fact that patients have their own unique values, views and ideas on what is best for them, along with the outcomes they would like to achieve and how they would like to achieve them.

In order for the above to be achieved, it is necessary for carers to get to know the patients they work with on a much deeper level and to ensure that they are actively involved in the decisions made regarding their care, support and treatment. Contrary to popular belief, the vast majority of patients respond negatively when important decisions are made on their behalf, without their input having first been sought.

This is where the difference with person-centred care lies. Rather than patients being viewed as 'tasks' or 'objects' with a condition to be treated, they are instead interpreted and appreciated as the important human beings they are, with their own unique feelings, thoughts and opinions.

Person-centred care effectively flips things around, by prioritising the person rather than their condition. It also means that the decisions carers make and the support they provide is tailored to meet their preferences and expectations - never the other way around. It is an approach to care that focuses on the autonomy and dignity of the patients being cared for, as opposed to the priorities of the individual or organisation providing the care.

When provided appropriately, person-centred care empowers the patient in question to live an enjoyable and fulfilling life.

Person-Centred Care in Practice

In a typical working example, person-centred care in practice looks a little like this:

- 26-year-old Alex was recently injured in an accident while driving to work and is currently receiving inpatient care, after undergoing surgery to both of his wrists. He will need to stay in hospital for at least 14 days before his discharge, during which he will struggle with various aspects of his everyday care.
- The nurses and carers looking after Alex during his stay consult with him directly, in order to discuss his lifestyle habits, preferences and everyday routine. During which, it's ascertained that he likes to read, enjoys listening to music, appreciates regular exercise and prefers to shower in the evening rather than the morning.
- Following these discussions, a care plan is created as a collaborative effort between all parties involved. Arrangements are made for Alex to shower each evening, his nurses help him operate his e-reader and also assist with putting on his headphones so he can listen to music. They also schedule frequent exercise breaks for Alex, helping him out of bed and providing the support he needs to get around.

- In this instance, his care team has adopted a person-centred approach, having taken into account his preferences and priorities accordingly. Rather than leaving him in bed for a fortnight with nothing to do but watch TV and shower when *told* to, Alex is provided with a care plan and routine that reflect his personality and priorities.

This is just a very basic example of person-centred care, but nonetheless illustrates how important it is to prioritise patient involvement. By asking patients what they would like instead of making assumptions or telling them what to do, they feel better cared for in both an emotional and physical sense.

All of which has been proven to contribute to a faster and more complete recovery, or better overall life quality for those dealing with longer-term conditions.

Principles of Person-Centred Care

The components of the person-centred care will always vary significantly from one patient to the next. However, the primary principles of person-centred care are constant and universal.

There are four core principles of person centred care, as outlined by the Health Foundation of the United Kingdom. Each of which is relatively broad in nature, though establishes an important basic framework for the provision of superior care.

These four person-centred care principles outlined by the Health Foundation are as follows:

1. Treat people with dignity, compassion, and respect

To require care of any kind is to at least partially lose your independence. Something that can take a toll on the dignity, confidence and self-respect of those concerned - all of which are of the utmost importance for facilitating a complete and prompt recovery.

Therefore, one of the main priorities and potential benefits of person-centred care is to ensure patients are supported in a way that maintains their dignity and self-respect, which means ensuring they are treated with empathy and compassion at all times.

It also means respecting their wishes and making sure that their values, beliefs, opinions, feelings and thoughts are kept in mind at all times. When patients are made to feel unimportant or like statistics, it can have a devastating impact on both their psychological and physical wellbeing.

2. Provide coordinated care, support, and treatment

Very rarely is just a single individual involved in the care and support of a patient. In most instances, care and support responsibilities are shared by various individuals, teams of individuals, organisations and authorities.

This is where the importance of providing the care that is comprehensively and meticulously coordinated is essential. Care and support is ineffective when two or more parties involved in a person's adopt a different approach, or simply are not on the 'same page' as each other.

Person-centred care is only effective when its core principles are understood, acknowledged and upheld by every party involved in a patient's care and support.

3. Offer personalised care, support, and treatment.

Of fundamental importance is appreciating the uniqueness of each and every patient across the board. In all instances without exception, person-centred care must be 100% personalised and unique from one individual to the next.

This means understanding and accepting that what works for one person could be entirely counterproductive for another. There is no room whatsoever for a generic or standardised approach in the provision of person-centred care. Anything but fully personalised care, support and treatment will make the patient feel like a statistic and could affect the quality of the care they receive.

Personalisation of care means tailoring the care and support provided in accordance with the wants, needs, preferences and priorities of the patient. Not to mention, their unique care and support requirements at the time.

4. Enable service users to recognise and develop their strengths and abilities, so they can live an independent and fulfilling life

The fourth and final person-centred care principal concerns the importance of helping patients to help and support themselves. This means focusing not only on their weaknesses and vulnerabilities, but also taking their strengths and capabilities into consideration.

When person-centred care is successful, the individual receiving it feels confident, independent and in control of their life. They appreciate and value the care and support they are receiving, but know that they are still in the driving seat at all times.

Of course, striking the right balance in this instance can be difficult, as many patients lack the confidence and/or knowledge to make life-affecting decisions on their own behalf. You don't

want to take control away from the patient, but at the same time you must avoid burdening them with more than they can handle.

Why is Person-Centred Care Important?

Research has shown that when person-centred care is provided effectively, it brings a wide variety of benefits - both for those receiving it and those providing it. Person-centred care goes beyond the basic coverage of health and care requirements, in order to take the personalities, priorities and preferences of patients into consideration.

Just a few of the potential benefits of effective person-centred care for the patient include the following:

- ✓ Patients have more confidence in the care and support services they receive and feel comfortable working with those involved in their support. This is because person-centred care focuses heavily on the dignity and independence of the patient, helping build a sense of mutual respect between the carer and the recipient.
- ✓ Patients enjoy a better overall quality of life, as those involved in their care and support offer a service that goes beyond their basic healthcare requirements. They also ensure that the patient's practical, social and emotional needs are met and that their preferences are taken into account.
- ✓ Patients benefit from a creative, holistic and fully personalised care plan, developed from scratch with their own unique requirements and personality in mind. They are not simply provided with a generic care plan and expected to adapt their views, preferences and way of life accordingly - the whole thing works the other way around.
- ✓ Patients are encouraged to maintain their independence and are empowered to play an important role in key decision-making processes regarding their care. They feel as if they are not 100% reliant on their carers and the support system they're provided with - they feel an important and integral part of their support network as a whole.

Importantly, the effective provision of person-centred care can be just as beneficial for those providing it. It's a mutually-advantageous approach to patient care and support, within which everybody wins.

Just a few of the potential benefits of effective person-centred care for those providing it include the following:

- ✓ Patients in general will be more likely to follow their treatment plans and use whatever medicines they are prescribed, as they feel they have played a major role in the development of the plan. It hasn't simply been 'forced' upon them - they help create it and are therefore more likely to stick to it.

- ✓ Patients provided with person-centred care are statistically less likely to put a strain on the limited resources of hospitals, doctors' surgeries and other healthcare facilities. They are empowered to take better care of themselves, they understand their condition and they know under which circumstances *only* should they seek emergency support.
- ✓ Patients who play a central role in the development of their own care and support plans are naturally more motivated to approach their lifestyle with a sense of positivity, optimism and tenacity. They believe in the plan they helped create and are therefore motivated to adopt positive health and lifestyle behaviours, calling for less direct or intensive supervision.
- ✓ Patients who receive effective person-centred care are almost always happier and more positive than those who receive more generic support. This makes them much more of a pleasure to work with and support on a daily basis for those caring for them.
- ✓ Patients who benefit from person-centred care are also significantly less time-consuming and more cost-efficient to support, from the perspective of a care provider. Their involvement in the process and motivation to stick to their care plan makes it much easier and more satisfying to support their needs.

On paper, person-centred care may come across as much more complex, involved and time-consuming than the provision of more standardised care.

But when you consider the benefits of effective person-centred care, it can actually be exponentially more effective, efficient and economical.

Putting the Person Before the Service

One of the simplest ways of looking at person-centred care is as an approach to care and support that prioritises the needs of the person over the needs of the service. Increasingly, people simply are not willing to sit back and let others decide what they think is best on their behalf. Even if they have no specific knowledge or understanding of the subject or condition in question, they have their own personalities, values and views that must be taken into account.

However, person-centred care can be complicated by the fact that not every patient is willing and/or able to tell you what they want or think. Some people may feel awkward or uncomfortable about sharing their views and preferences, while others who may be struggling with major physical or mental health conditions may be unable to make their views known.

Irrespective of potential communication difficulties, it is absolutely essential to ensure *all* patients participate in their care and are given the opportunity to be equal partners in the formulation of their care plan.

This may mean presenting the information on the options available in a specific format that they are able to understand, and subsequently agree or disagree to. Appropriate communication methods should be used to involve patients in key decision-making processes, which may go beyond basic conversational discussions.

The Importance of Flexibility and Intuition

Those who provide care and support for patients in any capacity must always be willing to negotiate. A degree of flexibility is essential, in order to prevent patients from feeling as if decisions have been forced upon them, or that they've been pressured into something they're not particularly happy with.

In addition, intuition plays a role in ensuring person-centred care is appropriate and effective. At all times, the potential effects of any given service provided must be considered, in accordance with the individual receiving it.

In a typical working example, consider the case of an older gentleman who needs help bathing and dressing. He's assigned a young female care assistant, who's more than capable of handling the mechanics of the man's requirements. She can help him get in and out of the bath, ensure the temperature of the water is appropriate, oversee his personal hygiene and generally play a role in preserving his dignity and confidence.

But how might the elderly gentleman receiving the support feel about being cared for by an individual younger than his granddaughter? Would the experience result in him feeling embarrassed, helpless, intimidated, awkward or humiliated? For that matter, have his preferences been taken into account in the first place, regarding whether he *wants* to bathe, rather than shower? And what about the times of day and the frequency with which the carer will visit him?

The key to successful person-centred care lies in looking beyond the obvious to consider the more 'personal' aspects of the care required. In the above instance, the gentleman concerned may prefer the help of a more mature assistant, male if possible, who instead of assisting with bathing twice a week will pop by three times a week while he showers.

Though the resulting outcome is technically the same - maintenance of good hygiene - taking the patient's preferences into account could safeguard his self-esteem and improve his life quality.

Some patients simply don't want to 'cause a fuss' and subsequently don't make their preferences known - even when it's obvious to those supporting them that they are not happy

with one or more aspects of their care. This is where intuition is essential, as it may be necessary to dig deep to ascertain what the patient actually wants.

Codes of Conduct

All health and care workers supporting patients in the United Kingdom are obliged to comply with strict codes of conduct, which may be locally or nationally driven. These standardised performance guidelines are published to ensure that all care and support services provided are respectful, non-judgmental, fair and free of prejudice.

Full details of each of these codes of conduct for the countries of United Kingdom can be found using the following links:

- England. [Code of Conduct for healthcare support workers in England](#)
- Scotland. [Code of Conduct for healthcare support workers in Scotland](#)
- Wales. [Code of Conduct for healthcare support workers in Wales](#)

No specific standardised codes of conduct have yet been published for healthcare assistants working in Northern Ireland, who are instead overseen by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.