



Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network (Australia)

engage, empower, enable choice in private mental health

DISCUSSION PAPER 4

PERSON CENTRED CARE

The Australian health care system is increasingly recognising that health care must be delivered based on the needs of the consumer, rather than expecting the consumer to fit the services designed to care for them.

So what does Patient Centred Care really mean? Can we include the critical concept of social justice when we talk about Person Centredness?

Whilst the focus of care is or should be wanting to assist each and every person as much as possible to obtain a good life, we know that system structure impediments work against the desired vision.¹

The Recovery framework includes the concept that people with mental distress will be better off if we focus our efforts on who they are, what their life experiences are, and what will assist in their recovery. If we take this approach and focus our efforts on these things, then we can see what and how the mental health system should best operate.

The origins of person-centredness has been inspired by Carl Rogers, the renowned American psychologist, who developed client-centred therapy (later called the 'person-centred approach') and contributes to the concept of 'self-actualization'.

Person centred services are those most commonly used for those with disabilities and the aged where physical aids and appliances are used to overcome some of their difficulties and based upon their individual needs (eg grab rails, bath seats, ramps etc). When the model of the service is based upon individual needs, this creates empowerment for the individual, increased sense of dignity and less dependence on services.

The underlying assumptions of person-centred thinking are that we will serve people better by knowing and responding to the individual in their full context. Person centredness refers to using values-based skills and approaches in designing and delivering service responses to address specific needs of individuals in their unique context.

The *Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care* (ACSQHC) defines Patient Centred Care as follows:

Patient or consumer centred care is health care that is respectful of, and responsive to, the preferences, needs and values of patients and consumers. Different definitions and terminology have been used to describe the concepts in this area but key principles of patient centred approaches include:

¹ Uniting Care Centre for Social Justice

- *treating patients, consumers, carers and families with dignity and respect*
- *encouraging and supporting participation in decision making by patients, consumers, carers and families*
- *communicating and sharing information with patients, consumers, carers and families*
- *fostering collaboration with patients, consumers, carers, families and health professionals in program and policy development, and in health service design, delivery and evaluation.*

In 2009, the Commission commenced a program that specifically focuses on fostering patient centred and partnership approaches to care: the Patient and Consumer Centred Care Program.

Patient or consumer centred care is increasingly being recognised as a dimension of high quality health care in its own right, and there is strong evidence that a patient centred focus can lead to improvements in health care quality and outcomes by increasing safety, cost effectiveness and patient, family and staff satisfaction.

Internationally, healthcare services use a range of strategies to promote patient centred care and partnerships with patients and their families. A range of organisations provide frameworks and tools to help implement these strategies such as the United States-based Institute for Patient- and Family-Centred Care and Planetree.

Within Australia, health care organisations are becoming increasingly interested in patient centred and partnership approaches to care. However ACSQHC is aware that while there is wide and strong commitment to a healthcare system that is focused on the needs of patients and consumers, health services and health service providers can struggle with enacting the principles of patient centred care in practice.

The Network believes that there are a number of other factors which need to be considered when we talk about Patient Centred care. Patient focussed care always has the patient at the centre in a holistic approach where they are provided with the support necessary to make their own decisions about any care needs. This provides a focus that looks at the individual, gives them a sense of belonging and supports their choices. Patients generally know what's best for them and what is in their own best interests.

The Network supports health care in Australia that is less illness centred but rather focusses on recovery, providing care is needed to enable the patient to contribute. The Network also supports a focus on the positive nature of recovery rather than focussing on behaviour. Patients become their own person, not recipients of something which is done to or for them.