

# Australian College of Nursing

## Position Statement

### Person Centred Care

#### Key Statement

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) considers person centred care to be a fundamental tenet of nursing and the broader health system. Person centred care emphasises that a person's health and individuality must inform their care and directs health professionals to respect peoples' cultural and spiritual beliefs, and their preferences and rights. A patient centred philosophy of care directs nurses to build patient nurse relationships of mutual trust and to empower the people they care for to make informed decisions about their care.

Nurses' ambitions for person centred care are often challenged by health care policies that drive patient throughput in a resource constrained environment. ACN believes that healthcare systems should also be driven by policies supporting person centred care. ACN believes that policy makers and nurses must collaborate with patients and consumers to develop systems of care that take account of the needs, beliefs, rights and preferences of individuals.

#### Background and Rationale

The concept of person centred care (also referred to as patient centred care, client centred care and patient centred approach/practice) has been an important underlying philosophy and a key driver in the provision of safe quality health care.<sup>iii iii</sup> In the Australian health care system, a person centred approach is supported in a range of national and state initiatives, including the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights,<sup>iv</sup> National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards, and the Australian Safety and Quality Framework for Healthcare.<sup>v vi</sup> National health reforms also propose to link evidence of person centred care with performance and funding incentives.<sup>vii</sup> Challenges remain in embedding a person centred model of care into health systems, due to limited resources, issues relating to staff skill mix, a continued focus on disease based models of care and funding incentives that encourage patient throughput.<sup>viii ix</sup>

There is no clear consensus on a nursing definition of person centred care.<sup>x</sup> However, the concept that a person's individual needs and preferences are central considerations in the provision of nursing care constitutes a philosophical foundation for nurses across all nursing specialties and settings<sup>xi</sup> and is articulated in the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's

professional practice framework.<sup>xii</sup> A focus on person centred care ensures that individuals remain at the centre of how all services are managed and delivered, across their lifespan and in any care context. Person centred care should be incorporated in every aspect of nursing care, including assessment, treatment, and advocacy.

Evidence clearly demonstrates that an association exists between person centred care and positive safety and quality outcomes. Examples include evidence of reduced mortality following myocardial infarction<sup>xiii</sup> and positive impacts on the patient and family/carer experience,<sup>xiv</sup> decreased rates of hospital acquired infections,<sup>xv</sup> and decreased admission to hospital from aged care facilities following adherence to advance care directives.<sup>xvi</sup> There is also evidence that the provision of person centred care is associated with increased nursing staff satisfaction.<sup>xvii</sup> Conversely the ramifications of nurses failing to place patients' needs and interests at the core of their care are illustrated in the Francis report into care provision at the Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust in the United Kingdom. The report describes failures in care provision which include many examples of patient neglect.<sup>xviii</sup>

In the delivery of person centred care nurses are often challenged by the care desired by the person, carer and/or family, best practice, and organisational imperatives placing competing demands on the nurse. Nurses, their health professional colleagues, consumers and policy makers need to collaborate to implement person centred models of care that balance these often contradictory demands<sup>xix</sup>

Employers also need to support the implementation of person centred models of care by providing the model with appropriate support, educating staff on this care philosophy, developing staff communication skills, supporting collaborative work relationships for all health employees and promoting individual accountability for person centred care.<sup>xx xxi</sup>

## References

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