

Promoting patient dignity in healthcare



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Summary:

The article published in the Nursing Times was aimed at heightening the awareness of patient dignity, and to help the nurse within clinical practice through empowerment, knowledge, awareness and skills.

This was summarised by The International Council of Nurses (ICN) (2006) Code of Ethics for nurses. This states *that nursing should never discriminate against race, gender, creed, culture, politics or social status* .

The article also highlights that there is evidence to show lack of dignity and awareness. The Department of Health (2006) has now endorsed new training to promote dignity.

Dignity is explained within the article as the ability to feel important; to communicate well; and highlights the importance of communication skills such as politeness, active listening, and having the assertive skills to challenge others when a patient's dignity has been breached.

Culture plays an important part in how dignity is looked at. It gives patients values and beliefs, influencing factors such as the manner in which they should be spoken to; use of eye contact (or not!); and other variables which depend on cultural beliefs.

Nurses should be able to support patient dignity. The patient should be treated as an individual from a holistic view, while respecting their own personal values and beliefs, and the standards that a patient expects. Patients should be informed of their individual care plan, and the choices available to them, thus empowering patient choice.

Being able to see that a patient is embarrassed; being able to read non-verbal communication; listening to the patient's needs and requirements; all make sure that the patient's dignity is maintained.

The Department of Health (2004), states that healthcare organisations should have a system in place to ensure that patients are treated with dignity and respect.

Significance/implications:

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC: 2008) states that making the care of people your first concern, treating them like individuals and respecting their dignity, and by not discriminating in anyway, those in your care.

The nurse should remember to treat a patient with dignity and in privacy, paying attention to any aspect of hygiene, such as washing, and observing that the patient is comfortable, and not embarrassed or helpless. Thus ensuring the patient's needs are being met (Brooker: 2007).

Communication is a vital and essential part of nursing. If nurse is unable to communicate well with a patient, the patient could easily lose their dignity.

We should be able to use communication skills with the patient – listening, and using non-verbal skills, with touch, facial gestures and body language (Brooker; 2007: 232).

“ Six key areas to promote dignity are privacy; confidentiality; communication and the need for information in making a choice; control; the involvement of care; and decency” (Matiti, 2008: 34).

In considering privacy, the nurse can make sure the patient is comfortable, in control and valued (Baillie, 2007: 34).

The patient should be informed of care and consent of care, able to make informed decisions regarding care; this should be implemented in nursing practice to ensure the correct choices for that individual is being met (Brooker; 2007: 165).

It is the nurse's professional duty to understand and implement patient dignity, and to make sure this is not threatened. It should be promoted in the nursing environment (Baillie; 2007: 34).

All nursing practice is underpinned by research. This article indicates many areas that should assist and maintain dignity, and contribute to the quality of care.