



## What is person-centred health care?

The Victorian Department of Human Services (2003) defines person-centred care for older people as "treatment and care provided by health services [that] places the person at the centre of their own care and considers the needs of the older person's carers."

The literature indicates that the main features of person-centred care can be encompassed in the concept of partnership. That is, person-centred care is about a collaborative and respectful partnership between the health service provider and the service user. The following principles of person-centred care are all included within the concept of partnership:

1. getting to know the patient or client as a person
2. sharing of power and responsibility between the service user and service provider
3. accessibility and flexibility of both the service provider as a person and of the services provided
4. coordination and integration of care for the service user
5. having an environment that is conducive to person-centred care both for service providers and service users.



### Does person-centred health care work?

The evidence available in the published literature is largely supportive of person-centred approaches to care. Communication between the physician and patient, specifically asking questions about the patient's understanding, expectations and feelings and showing support and empathy, can make a positive difference to patient health outcomes. There is also evidence of improved client and carer satisfaction, improved adherence to intervention recommendations and an improved sense of professional worth as outcomes of working in a person-centred way.

### Key elements to consider in providing effective person-centred health care in your organisation:

- having skilled, knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff, especially with good communication skills
- opportunities for involving the service user, their carers, family and community (for example, volunteers) in health care
- providing the opportunity for staff to reflect on their own values and beliefs and express their concerns
- opportunities for staff training and education, including feedback from service users
- organisational support for this approach to practice
- working in an environment of mutual respect and trust
- physically and emotionally enriched care environments
- being in the client's home.

### Barriers to providing person-centred health care:

The main barriers to providing person-centred health care are:

- time
- dissolution of professional power, or staff experiencing a loss of professional status and decision making power
- staff lacking the autonomy to practice in this way
- the lack of clarity about what constitutes person-centred care, making it more difficult to practice and to explain to clients
- clients with communication difficulties
- the constraining nature of institutions, including physically or spiritually impoverished environments of care.

### For further information:

For more information about person-centred care or for information on good practice resources or initiatives in person-centred care please go to:

<http://www.nari.unimelb.edu.au/pchc>.

