“What Matters to You”
Enhancing Compassionate Person-Centered Care

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Background

In July 2015, the Health Service Executive (HSE), in partnership with Age Friendly Ireland, published their report of older peoples’ experiences with healthcare in Ireland (HSE & Age Friendly Ireland 2015). The report found that, in general, older people feel invisible and regard services they receive to be lacking in dignity, respect and compassion. These findings are similar to the Mid-Staffordshire Enquiry that noted older people were viewed as a nuisance, rather than adults who should be partners in their care (Francis 2013). The Department of Health (DOH), (United Kingdom) state that the measure of safe, compassionate care is in how we care for vulnerable older people and suggest:

“Care needs to be just as important as treatment. Older people should be properly valued, listened to and treated with compassion, dignity and respect”. (Department of Health 2014 p197).

Introduction

On admission and throughout the acute hospital stay, the main focus of the healthcare professional is the medical model of care, which revolves around the physical status of the patient (Dewar & Nolan 2013). Hospital staff work in a system where patient flow and lengths of stay are indicators of effective organisations (HSE 2015). The emphasis appears to centre on “what’s the matter with you” (Dovey et al. 2010).

While the presenting health issue is a concern to the patient, their experience of hospital care is measured by the level of dignity, compassion and respect with which they are treated. The National Clinical Programme for Older People (NCPOP), in collaboration with the Quality Improvement Division (QID) and the Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF), are partnering with St Vincent’s University Hospital (SVUH) and Midlands Hospital Portlaoise (MHP) to pilot the roll out of “What Matters to You” a person-centered approach to care which has seen great success in NHS Scotland.

Rationale

Compassionate care has traditionally been a valued element of nursing in Ireland. In the past decade a number of reports (Leas Cross 2006, Lourdes Report 2006; UCHG 2013: Aras Attracta 2013; 2015; Portlaoise 2014, 2015) have challenged this concept (Department of Health 2016). The Service Plan (2015) explicitly states that quality and patient safety must be an integral part of healthcare. It emphasises that people’s experience of the health service must be “safe, of high quality, but also caring and compassionate” (HSE 2015 p 3).

Compassionate care involves knowing the patient as a person (Lown et al. 2011) and developing a relationship of equals where the carer conveys an understanding of the patient’s suffering in a way that alleviates some of that suffering. There is a critical link between services who regard the patient as an equal contributor to their care, where their opinions are sought and valued, and the provision of compassionate care (DOH 2014).

In reflecting on the many lessons learned in recent investigations, the HSE are committed to developing a health system devoted to a culture where the patients’ needs are central, communicated and understood. The “What Matters to You” initiative supports this concept.

What Matters to You

A suite of tools has been designed for use which include:

- “What Matters to You” logo
- “What Matters to You” patient information leaflet
- “What Matters to You” posters
- “What Matters to You” guideline
- “What Matters to You” signage for use when the patient or carer do not want their information displayed in public view

Photo: “What Matters to You” Education Programme

Learning to date

The initiative will be fully evaluation in March 2017. However, from completed boards to date it is obvious that staff “get a better “sense of the person” from the information obtained in this manner.

- One person with dementia liked to sing and her niece brought in GDS with the songs that she used to sing in the church choir, which helped to reduce her agitation.
- One patient was very agitated and staff asked the clinical psychologist to help complete the board with her. They found out information, that when they addressed, helped to reduce her agitation.
- Knowing that one lady’s two nieces were the most important people in her life allowed staff to have more meaningful conversations with her and engage with her on a more personal level.

References

Department of Health. (2014). Hard Truths Delivering high quality, effective compassionate care: Developing the journey to putting the right people with the right skills and the right values. A mandate from the Government to Health Education England.


Lown, B. A., Rosen, J., & Martilla, J. (2011). An agenda for improving compassionate care: A survey shows about half of patients say such care is missing. Health Affairs, 30(9), 1772

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To enhance compassionate person-centered relationships in the acute hospital through the introduction of the “What Matters to You” initiative 

Primary Drivers. Identify the key stakeholders. Semi-structured interviews with patients and staff. Building capacity and understanding of person-centered care.


Driver Diagram

Figures

Figures “What Matters to You” Board

- The intended impact of the initiative is to:
  - Counter-balance the sense of invisibility felt by older people admitted to the pilot wards (HSE & Age Friendly Ireland 2015).
  - Positively influence the experience of patients as they express the issues that are important to them (Firth-Cozens & Cormwell 2009).
  - Enhance the potential to deliver compassionate care. which, in turn, enhances positive outcomes for patients (Lown et al. 2011).
  - Thereby increases staff satisfaction (Drayton & Weston 2015).

Objective of “What Matters to You”

- Counter-balance the sense of invisibility felt by older people admitted to the pilot wards (HSE & Age Friendly Ireland 2015).
- Positively influence the experience of patients as they express the issues that are important to them (Firth-Cozens & Cormwell 2009).
- Enhance the potential to deliver compassionate care. which, in turn, enhances positive outcomes for patients (Lown et al. 2011).
- Thereby increases staff satisfaction (Drayton & Weston 2015).