

Description of patient-centeredness suitable for laypersons (version using impersonal address)

Note: The term “health care professionals” refers to all occupational groups who are involved in the care of patients. These are, for example, doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, and psychologists.

Principles of patient-centered care

Essential characteristics of health care professionals

The health care professionals are:

- Sensitive
- Honest
- Appreciative
- Trustworthy

The health care professionals are aware of their own behavior and of their own emotions. They have a high level of professional expertise.

Trustful relationship

A trustful relationship exists between the patient and the health care professional. If possible, the main contact person remains consistently the same. Before the health care encounter, the health care professional reviews the medical history of the patient. The health care professional addresses the patient’s present complaints and state of health.

Patient as a unique person

The health care professionals respond to:

- Needs
- Preferences
- Concerns
- Expectations

The health care professionals acknowledge that people differ from each other.



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Principles of patient-centered care (continued)

Consideration of living-conditions

The health care professionals try to understand the patient as a whole person. All aspects of life are considered in the treatment.

Examples are:

- Body
- Psyche/ soul
- Relationship
- Family and friends
- Profession and leisure time



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Enablers of patient-centered care

Adequate communication

The health care professionals communicate in an adequate and supportive manner.

Examples are:

- Easily understandable speech
- Asking questions
- Active listening
- Keeping eye contact

Integration of medical and non-medical care

Complementary offers are recognized and integrated into the treatment, if the patient wishes to do so. Examples are:

- Self-help groups
- Alternative medicine/ complementary medicine (e.g. homeopathy, osteopathy, acupuncture, natural medicine)
- Spiritual support/ pastoral care

Teamwork of health care professionals

Within a large practice or hospital, cooperation is of special importance. Health care professionals with diverse specializations and professions work together as a team. The cooperation is characterized by:

- Good agreements
- Respect
- Trust
- Shared responsibility

The management level supports the teamwork.



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Enablers of patient-centered care (continued)

Access to care

The patient has easy access to his/ her health care professionals without any obstacles.

Examples are:

- Hospitals and practices located close to the place of residence
- Easy access to treatment even in case of possible obstacles (e.g. handicap or lack of language skills)
- Preferably low copayments for health insurance services under recognition of the patient's financial means
- Good appointment allocation: The patient receives appointments in time (also with a specialist) and flexibly (e.g. via phone or email). Sufficient time is scheduled for the appointment.
- In case of an emergency, the patient receives a treatment even outside the opening hours of the practice (e.g. on-call duty or home visits).
- The patient easily receives information about which health care professionals offer what kind of treatments and specializations.

Coordination and continuity of care

A harmonized and continuous treatment is ensured.

This means:

- Consecutive treatments are discussed and arranged
- Appointments are made for screening, follow-up review, and check-up
- Good coordination in case of change of hospitals and practices
- If the patient is treated by more than one health care professional, they reach agreements regarding the patient's treatment

On request, the patient receives support from a permanent contact person in the health care system who helps the patient to organize treatments and appointments. The contact person also aids the patient in arranging documents and applications as well as filling in forms.



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Enablers of patient-centered care (continued)

Patient safety

The treatment is arranged in a manner to reduce the risk of negative consequences and mistakes in the treatment to a minimum.

Examples are:

- Cleanliness of the facilities and of the medical devices
- Recent scientific results are considered in the treatment
- Drug interactions are considered
- Detailed information in medical record



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Activities

Patient information

The health care professionals provide the patient with information regarding the screening, disease, possible treatments, and the potential costs that arise due to additional payments. This information is tailored to the patient's personal preferences and needs. The advantages and disadvantages of each treatment option are explained to the patient based on scientific evidence. The patient is encouraged to share his/ her own knowledge with the health care professionals. If the patient is prescribed medication, he/ she receives a written overview of the administration and potential side-effects (plan of medication).

Patient involvement in care

It is aimed for an equal collaboration between the patient and the health care professionals. Decisions about the patient's healthcare are made together, if the patient wishes to do so. The patient can actively engage in the consultation by sharing his/ her views, preferences, and aims.

Involvement of family and friends

The patient's family members and friends are involved in the healthcare as much as the patient wants them to be involved.

Examples are:

- Family and friends receive information
- Family and friends participate in consultations
- Family and friends actively support the treatment in daily life (e.g. support with taking pills or taking the patient to the treatment)

Patient empowerment

The health care professionals encourage the patient to actively and autonomously manage his/ her health problem and its treatment. Thereby, the patient becomes an expert regarding his/ her own disease.

Examples are:

- To handle the demands of the disease well in daily life
- To actively participate in the consultations with health care professionals
- To find ones way around the health care system
- Opportunities to improve the own situation (e.g. exercising or finding a new hobby)



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Activities (continued)

Physical support

The health care professionals take care of the patient's physical wellbeing.

Examples are:

- Pain management
- Healthy diet
- If required, assistance with daily living needs during and after acute treatment (e.g. nursing service for daily living needs at home or prescription of crutches and exercises to correctly use them)

Emotional support

The health care professionals elicit and respond to the patient's emotional issues and his/her mental wellbeing.

Examples are:

- Talking about concerns and fears
- Offering psychological support



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