“Humanity, respect and dignity are the foundations of practice”

Focusing care on what is important to individuals as human beings enables us to understand and more fully appreciate a person’s personal experience of ill health, enabling us to have a better understanding of how to support them. This will help to ensure a dignified and respectful approach to care; focused on treating others how we would wish to be treated.

The draft education outcomes framework published this summer by Health Education England includes an outcome focusing on NHS values and behaviour. Staff need to ensure that they behave at all times in accordance with the NHS constitution. The key elements of this constitution include “respect and dignity” where we value each person as an individual, respect their aspirations and commitments in life, and seek to understand their priorities, needs, abilities and limits. We take what others have to say seriously. And act with “compassion” where we respond with humanity and kindness to each person’s pain, distress, anxiety or need. We search for the things we can do, however small, to give comfort and relieve suffering. We do not wait to be asked, because we care.

Achieving the Nursing and Midwifery Council’s standards for pre-registration nursing education are a joint responsibility involving university nursing departments and placement provider organisations. It is crucial to have a shared underlying philosophy for the programmes in theory and practice. I would argue that central to this should be a joint commitment to humanising values as a vital influence on education and practice.

It is essential that nurses who act as mentors and educators are role models in learning from and listening to those they are caring for.

Mentors can demonstrate a nursing philosophy that shows understanding the experiences and views of those we care for is essential to enable us to undertake care humanely, with respect and dignity. As mentors we take on responsibility for the next generation of nurses and how we treat each other needs to demonstrate our philosophy in action. Indeed, ultimately, as mentors, we need to consider when assessing students, would we be happy for this person to care for us or our loved ones at our time of greatest need?

In caring environments, which are exposed to continuous change and reorganisation, mentors and students must demonstrate a clear philosophy focused on caring for human beings with respect and dignity. This is imperative to ensure we abide by the NHS constitution and offer patient-centred care. This philosophy needs to be integrated across the taught and practice programme for students and be demonstrated and assessed in practice. We are the ones upon whom the responsibility for upholding the standards of care rests. Humanity, respect and dignity must be the foundations for our practice with those we care for, those we work with and those we mentor.

Ann Hemingway is senior lecturer public health at School of Health and Social Care, Bournemouth University.

HIGHLIGHTS

Using devices to reduce sharps risk p12
A framework for person-centred care p26
Delivering cardiac rehabilitation p17

SPOTLIGHT

Kathryn Godfrey is practice and learning editor of Nursing Times.
kathryn.godfrey@emap.com
Twitter @GodfreyKathryn. Don’t miss the practice blog, go to nursingtimes.net/practiceblog

Refer heart failure patients to specialists

Patients with chronic heart failure have often fallen between the gaps in services so it is good to see nurse-led service improvement for this group as reported in this week’s issue.

On page 22 the evidence shows specialist heart failure nurses cut hospital readmissions and improve quality of life for patients with chronic heart failure. However, not all patients with heart failure are being referred to this service due to lack of awareness among health professionals.

All patients with chronic heart failure should be referred to a specialist nurse if admitted to hospital. Referring these patients and campaigning for a specialist nurse in areas where they are not yet in post will help to improve the experience for these patients who struggle with a demoralising and debilitating disease.

Kathryn Godfrey is practice and learning editor of Nursing Times.