

# THE PATIENT-CENTERED APPROACH

## TOPICS COVERED

- The patient-centered approach
- Behaviours associated with a patient-centered approach
- The importance of communication in a patient-centered approach
- The positive impact of a patient-centered approach
- The contribution of a patient-centered approach to ethical care

## THE PATIENT-CENTERED APPROACH

The Patient-Centered Approach (PCA) pioneered in Canada by Stewart and collaborators (2003) proposes to assess and understand the person as a whole, and not just from the point of view of illness.

It is about understanding how people experience their illness, how they perceive the symptoms and describe the problem.

The health professional and the patient define together the nature of the problem, the treatment and their respective role (Bedos and Loignon, 2011).

“It is not in itself an approach targeted to Francophone minority communities (FMCs); however, some dimensions of the client-centered approach, such as sensitivity toward clients’ language and culture, understanding their language and culture, identifying their needs and communicating with them, may also be addressed from the point of view of characteristics belonging to clients from a Francophone minority context”. [Translation] (Benoît et al., 2015, p. 122)

### BEHAVIOURS ASSOCIATED WITH A PATIENT-CENTERED APPROACH

#### Explore individuals’ life experiences:

- How they feel about the disease
- The consequence of this problem on their life (impact on the person’s functioning)
- Individuals’ expectations of what the caregiving staff can do to help resolve the problem

#### Try to know and better understand individuals as a whole, by asking questions about the context in which they live:

- Who shares their daily lives (family, partner, children)
- What support mechanisms are available to them
- What other social aspects come into play (work, finances, education, etc.)

Come to a common understanding of the problem and the role of each person to resolve it:

- Encourage discussion
- Provide opportunities to ask questions
- Encourage feedback
- Obtain clarification and consensus
- Address differences of opinion

Agree on a course of action to resolve the problem and incorporate:

- The person's life context
- Health promotion and disease prevention
- Help necessary for the management of behavior changes

Include each individual in decision-making (tests that need to be done, treatment, preferred diagnostic procedure).

Address problems realistically, respect the person’s priorities and those of the caregiving staff, while considering individual and community resources (Crichton et al., 2020).

### THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN A PATIENT-CENTERED APPROACH

Linguistic concordance between the client and the health professional is essential to the patient-centered approach. In the presence of language barriers, the user may have difficulty describing their context, symptoms or worries, asking questions or understanding the information about their illness and the intervention plan.

The health professionals wishing to use the PCA, will check at the first meeting with the patients and their families, if there are communication barriers; culture, language, level of health literacy.

Thus they will be able to put in place mechanisms to promote effective communication. by using bilingual staff, documents in the user's language, professional interpreters, or other solutions available.

### THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF A PATIENT-CENTERED APPROACH

The PCA helps to maintain the autonomy of patients and to recognize their preferences, needs, and values. Caregivers can then act accordingly instead of guessing who is the person in front of him. The patients participate in the decisions that concern them, they are active and autonomous.

**Research has shown many advantages to PCA. Here a some of them:**

- Better health condition (Jackson, 2005; Jahng & al., 2005)
- Improved behavior related to disease prevention and health maintenance
- Better adherence to treatment, namely to instructions, primarily in prevention or chronic diseases cases (Stewart et al., 2000)
- Increased satisfaction for patients and health professionals (Mallinger et al.)

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF A PATIENT-CENTERED APPROACH TO ETHICAL CARE

There is an agreement within the health system that maintaining the autonomy of patients and recognizing their preferences, needs and values are essential to providing ethical health care (American Medical Association, 2006).

The PCA contributes to ethical care, in particular by aiming to get to know the patients better, their expectations and priorities, and also by involving them in decision-making.

Providing ethical care therefore also means taking into account the language in which the patients want to communicate and thus allow them to participate fully in the care process. In addition, effective communication will promote a better care relationship, around which builds ethical health care.

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