Compassion and care work – ‘do as you would be done by’

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Outline

Why is compassion such a buzz word? Who needs compassion? Where do we go from here?
Longstanding debates about how we acquire compassion

Having a ‘compassionate character’ was seen as an essential prerequisite for being a nurse from 19th c (Bradshaw, 2011)
But....

Increasing number of reports highlighting contrasts between principles and realities of care.
Highlighted persistent warning signs, poor leadership and priority setting

1.122 Patients must be the first priority in all of what the NHS does by ensuring that, within available resources, they receive effective care from caring, compassionate and committed staff, working within a common culture, and protected from avoidable harm and any deprivation of their basic rights.

1.185 There should be an increased focus on a culture of compassion and caring in nurse recruitment, training and education. Nursing training should ensure that a consistent standard is achieved by all trainees throughout the country. The achievement of this will require the establishment of national standards. The knowledge and skills framework should be reviewed with a view to giving explicit recognition to nurses’ commitment to patient care and the priority that should be accorded to dignity and respect in the acquisition of leadership skills.

1.201 As a part of this mandatory annual performance appraisal, each clinician and nurse should be required to demonstrate their ongoing commitment, compassion and caring shown towards patients, evidenced by feedback of the appraisee from patients and families, as well as from colleagues and co-workers. This portfolio could be made available to the GMC or the NMC, if requested as part of the revalidation process.
Cavendish Review (2013)

The Cavendish Review

An Independent Review into Healthcare Assistants and Support Workers in the NHS and social care settings

July 2013

‘In social care, it was felt that staff needed to learn how to build relationships with each individual they care for, not just focus on a list of tasks performed mechanically. The future workforce will need not just to be “competent” (the word most commonly used in both sectors), but to start learning from their first day about how to act with compassion and respect ’(5.2.1)
Compassion in short supply?

BBC Panorama
Winterbourne View Hospital
What the papers didn’t say

‘Professional and frontline staff were typically hardworking and committed to delivering respectful care that supports the independence and self-determination of patients and residents’

Panicoa Report 2013
Methods

What did we do? How did we do it?
Longitudinal Care Work Study (LoCS)

- 4 areas in England
- Care homes and home care
- 120 interviews (T1 & T2)
- Older people, mental health, learning disability

Managers

- Same 4 areas
- Recruited via establishments where managers interviewed or elsewhere
- 93 (aiming for 120) T1 and T2

Staff

- Same 4 areas
- Recruited via participating establishments or elsewhere
- 51 interviews (aiming for 60) at one point in time

Service users and carers
Comparatively uncommon to use word ‘compassion’
- More likely to use related terms such as ‘kindness’
- Or to refer to a specific example to describe what they meant
- More about the way care was delivered rather than what was done
- Or omissions in care

Used as a way of describing importance of relational care
‘Values based recruitment’

Large companies had corporate approach to recruitment.

Owner managers/small companies had own strategies.
Leadership

- Managers identified their role in modelling desirable behaviour.
- Workers more inclined to describe their personal attempts to maintain their values.
Changing nature of social care

- Emphasis in past on ‘independence’
- Does this reflect reality of care today?
  - More people receiving end of life care
  - More people with long term health problems
Social care wants to be kind?

- Compassion is a relevant concept but term less frequently used in social care than in nursing or other health contexts.
Compassion for care staff and managers

What do these findings suggest?
Compassion or kindness for care staff

- Care workers and managers value ‘respect’ by others in care world (often don’t feel this is there)
- Would like to be partners in care
- Highly aware of impact of bad press – feel under spotlight
- Not often thanked
- ‘Just a care worker’ self-image
- The ‘daughter test’ (or son)
A Litmus Test?

• Managers know 10 things about each member of staff
• We learn from things that go well, from near misses as well as errors and mistakes
• We would pass the family & friends test
• Your suggestions (and your staff’s)
I think that’s probably one of the biggest things that’s necessary [is] really closely monitored training and to give [staff] knowledge about Alzheimer’s and dementia. If you haven’t got that then you’ve not got anything. You need that as well as the general compassion.
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