COMPASSION & ETHICS IN CARE

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Compassion Awareness

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Outline

• Different ways of thinking about healthcare ethics
• Ethical/moral competence
• Ethical values frameworks as applied to care – NHS Constitution, NMC Code, GMC Code, Trust values’ statements….
• Other ethical ideas relevant to the CAP project
• Compassion – What does this mean? Why does it matter? & Is it enough?
• Application to digital story - Alf
Healthcare Ethics

Good people doing the right thing in healthcare organisations that value people?

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Thinking about ethics

- I did my duty
- I respected her rights
- I promoted his autonomy & dignity
- I weighed up benefits and harms
- I treated him fairly
- I demonstrated virtues/moral qualities
- I engaged in a caring relationship
- I muddle through drawing on a range of values...

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Ethical Competence?


Ethical ‘knowing’ [ethical theories/approaches/concepts]

Ethical ‘reflecting’ [deliberation, deciding, applying ethical approaches]

Ethical ‘acting’ [doing the right thing – actions and omissions]

Ethical ‘being’ [good character & demonstrating the virtues]
Values...

‘...we are hunters and gatherers of values.’
[also interrogators]

‘...images and stories... do function as bearers of values...’

‘try to make space in my reckoning for the marvellous as well as for the murderous.’

(1995 Nobel lecture)
Monoethics &

Tsunami of frameworks

Monoethics?

Tendency to focus on single values e.g. dignity... and currently, compassion

Multiple frameworks

Codes

NMC e.g. ‘You must treat people kindly and considerately’. -http://www.nmc-uk.org/Publications/Standards/The-code/Introduction/


Chief Nursing Officer England - 6 C’s (2012) – care, compassion, competence communication, courage and commitment

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ICN Code (2012)

‘Nurses have four fundamental responsibilities: to promote health, to prevent illness, to restore health and to alleviate suffering. The need for nursing is universal.

Inherent in nursing is a respect for human rights, including cultural rights, the right to life and choice, to dignity and to be treated with respect. Nursing care is respectful of and unrestricted by considerations of age, colour, creed, culture, disability or illness, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, politics, race or social status.’

Core values?

• Dignity
• Respectfulness – for human rights, life, choice
• Consent
• Confidentiality
• Social justice & equity
• Trustworthiness
• Compassion
• Integrity
Trust Values Frameworks?

http://www.ashfordstpetes.nhs.uk/for-careers/about-the-team

http://www.sabp.nhs.uk/aboutus/visionvalues?searchterm=vision+values

For a better life -

• Treat people well
• Involve not ignore
• Create respectful places
• Open, inclusive and accountable

• Patients first
• Personal responsibility
• Passion for excellence
• Pride in our team
Other ethical ideas

- Moral distress
- Moral resilience
- Ethical/moral climate
- Ethical problems – moral unpreparedness, moral blindness, moral indifference, moral complacency, moral fanaticism, moral dilemmas...

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Compassion

Not a new idea....

The Dalai Lama (1999 p.p.123) reminds us that ‘the importance of cultivating love and compassion’ is emphasised by all major religions. Buddhist teaching informs us that:

At a basic level, compassion (nying je) is understood mainly in terms of empathy – our ability to enter into, and to some extent, share others’ suffering. But Buddhists – and perhaps others – believe that this can be developed to such a degree that not only does our compassion arise without any effort, but it is unconditional, undifferentiated, and universal in scope...’
Compassion

Dewar’s (2011 p.263):

…the way in which we relate to other human beings when they are vulnerable.

It has to be nurtured and supported. It involves noticing another person’s vulnerability, experiencing an emotional reaction to this and acting in some way with the person, in a way that is meaningful for people. It is defined by the people who give and receive it and therefore interpersonal processes that capture what it means to people, are an important element of its promotion.

From Latin ‘co-suffering’
Compassion as a virtue or ethical quality of the person: A disposition to help in response to the suffering of others.

Vices = excess & deficiency

Too much? – over-involvement, assumptions about suffering, paternalism, infantilisation…

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Being there

- Unconscious, sedated and dying;
- Getting to know Alf, the person, through Jean;
- Described as ‘a difficult man’ – a suffering family;
- Importance of ‘listening carefully and judging slowly’...

Compassion necessary – an ethical response to suffering.

Other values? Dignity, autonomy, justice, courage

Engagement of head [thinking], heart [emotions] & body [positioning/touch]

Compassion awareness Vs ethical competence?
Ethical seeing, knowing, reflecting, acting & being?

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Your role in sustaining ethical practice?

- Role modelling and leadership
- Making space & time to listen & learn from multi-disciplinary perspectives
- Becoming a compassion lead/trainer
- Acknowledge & reward exemplary ethical practices
- Raise & escalate concerns
- Always striving to understand and engage with micro, meso & macro explanations & sustainable solutions

Resources

Compassion Awareness Toolkit

Journals e.g.

Nursing Ethics
Journal of Medical Ethics
Ethics & Social Welfare

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Thank You for Your Attention

International Care Ethics (ICE) Observatory

http://www.surrey.ac.uk/fhms/research/centres/ICE/

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