

# Improving compassion and care for older people

October 22 2014

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Researchers at the University of Southampton are launching a study to improve the compassion and care experienced by older people on hospital wards.

The Francis Inquiry reported that many [older patients](#) experienced negative and uncaring attitudes and behaviours on wards, resulting in a perceived lack of compassion. Working with Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust and University Hospitals Southampton NHS Foundation Trust (UHS), the University of Southampton has responded to those findings with the introduction and evaluation of a new practice development programme for nurses.

The Creating Learning Environments for Compassionate Care (CLECC) programme aims to promote compassionate care for older [hospital patients](#). Education is often proposed as one solution to the quality problems, but the best approach is not known. Previous research indicates that workplace learning and a focus on ward nursing teams may be most effective, but no research to date has assessed the impact of such programmes on the quality of care. This study, funded by the National Institute for Health Research Health Services and Delivery Research Programme, aims to begin to address this gap.

Dr Jackie Bridges, Associate Professor [for Older People's and Dementia Care] of Health Sciences at the University is leading the study. She says: "There is widespread public support for the proposal that older patients should consistently experience compassionate care. But too

often individual nurses are blamed for a lack of compassion, when in fact, their capacity to be caring may well depend on the conditions they are working in. CLECC moves the focus to that local ward climate, aiming to build supportive working relationships between team members and to support the ward manager in leading the development of a compassionate team. This study aims to put CLECC into practice and do the groundwork needed for a future, larger, study to test that it makes a difference to patients."

The programme will include manager leadership workshops, a new 'care maker volunteer' role, and learning sessions that will include patient feedback. It will be implemented at four wards at Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth and Southampton General Hospital over a four month period.

Nicky Lucey, Director of Nursing at Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust, comments: "We have very dedicated nurses that are passionate about the [high quality care](#) they provide and being part of this study will help them to further the high-level service they give to our older patients. Our nurses will be able to put their learning into practice to ensure showing compassion goes hand-in-hand with providing first-class healthcare."

Rosemary Chable, Associate Director of Nursing for Education and Practice Development at UHS, adds: "We are really pleased to be an active practice partner in this exciting research study.

"The new approaches it will introduce for our patients and staff to further embed compassionate care into our wards is really innovative and we look forward to working together to identify the benefits to patient care."

Provided by University of Southampton

Citation: Improving compassion and care for older people (2014, October 22) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-10-compassion-older-people.html>

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