1 Fundamentals of nursing care

- Treat each person as an individual
- Listen to and respect their views
- Work with patients and their families/carers to identify their individual needs and decide, with them, what care is required to meet these needs (and ensure that it is carried out)
- Promote privacy
- Offer choice whenever possible
- Ensure patients and their families/carers know what is happening, what to expect and what their role in care entails
- Ensure people can voice satisfaction and dissatisfaction with care without fearing reprisal
- Question practice that you think is inappropriate

- Safeguarding dignity
- Skilled appropriate communication
- Accurate assessment and monitoring
- Tailored symptom control and management
- Attentive risk assessment and management
- Tailored health education and promotion
- Thorough discharge planning
- Evaluation of the outcomes of care and care processes
- Research and service development
The fundamentals of nursing care

- Excellent care is about what we do and how we do it.
- Fundamental to excellent nursing is the merging of technically competent care with the maintenance and/or enhancement of the patient's (and their family's and carer's) dignity.
- Care that is technically competent but does not promote the patient's dignity is inadequate: care that promotes dignity but is not technically competent is also inadequate.
- Excellent nursing is therefore underpinned by the following:
  - safeguarding dignity;
  - skilled appropriate communication;
  - accurate assessment and monitoring;
  - tailored symptom control and management;
  - attentive risk assessment and management;
  - tailored health education and promotion;
  - thorough discharge planning;
  - evaluation of the outcomes of care and care processes;
  - research and service development.

Maintaining the patient's dignity

- Dignity is often said to be hard to define. The available definitions tend to focus on either the professional view of dignity or the public's view. The challenge is to integrate them.
- Professional definitions of dignity are often abstract and are inclined to focus on the behaviours, values and attitudes that professionals need to have, for example 'Dignity is concerned with how people feel, think and behave in relation to the worth or value of themselves and others. To treat someone with dignity is to treat them as being of worth, in a way that is respectful of them as valued individuals' (RCN, 2008: www.rcn.org.uk).
- Public reports (e.g. Francis, 2013), however, suggest that patients and the public see dignity in more pragmatic terms focusing on whether or not certain important aspects of daily living can be completed whilst relying on others for assistance, for example being able to go to the toilet when needed, having privacy, being able to wash after using the toilet; having food and drink that can be consumed when needed and when wanted, being helped with eating and drinking if necessary; being listened to and having opinions respected.
- Integrating the professional and the public views of dignity is important to the provision of excellent care so that the patient and his/her family feel that they have experienced competent individualised care that allowed them to maintain their dignity.
- Dignity is maintained by:
  - What nurses do. (e.g.)
    Work with patients and their families/carers to identify their individual needs and decide, with them, what care is required to meet these needs.
  - How nurses do it. (e.g.)
    Treat each patient as an individual.
    Listen to and respect their views.
    Work in partnership with each patient and their family/carers. Offer choice wherever possible.
    Promote privacy.
    Ensure people can voice satisfaction and dissatisfaction with care without fearing reprisal.
  - When nurses do it. (e.g.)
    Identify with patients (and their family/carers) mutually convenient times for care whenever possible.
    Ensure that medications, designed to fit the patient's needs rather than the treatment plan are given on time (particularly night sedation).

The following pages detail the essentials of technically competent care which need to accompany the maintenance of the patient's (and their family's and carer's) dignity to ensure best practice.