



Dignity in care for older people: Bridging the gap between policy and practice

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Definition

“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)

Dignity in the care of older people

Whilst the past decade has seen a growing emphasis placed upon ensuring dignity in the care of older people it appears that this policy objective is not being consistently achieved and there is a gap between policy and practice.

What is the aim of this study?

This study aims to investigate how dignified care for older people is understood and delivered by the health and social care workforce and how organisational structures and policies can promote and facilitate, or hinder, the delivery of dignified care.



Project Background

30 month Dunhill Medical Trust funded project





Recruitment sites

The participants in this study were drawn from four Trusts with good dignity ratings:


- Royal Berkshire Hospital Foundation NHS Trust
 - The Hillingdon Hospital NHS Trust
 - Berkshire Healthcare Foundation NHS Trust
 - Central and North West London NHS Trust
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Pilot Study

- 11 health and social care professionals were asked to provide feedback on survey questionnaire, interview and focus group schedule.

Main comments:

- Positive feedback
 - Seven participants stressed that an online questionnaire would receive a better response rate than hard copies.
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Data Collection

This study is an in-depth case study involving a mixed method design employing:

Design	Target	Recruitment to date
Questionnaire Survey	300	103
In-depth interviews	50	19
Focus Groups	13	7
Analysis of organisational documents and policies	-	

Questionnaire Survey

Preliminary Findings



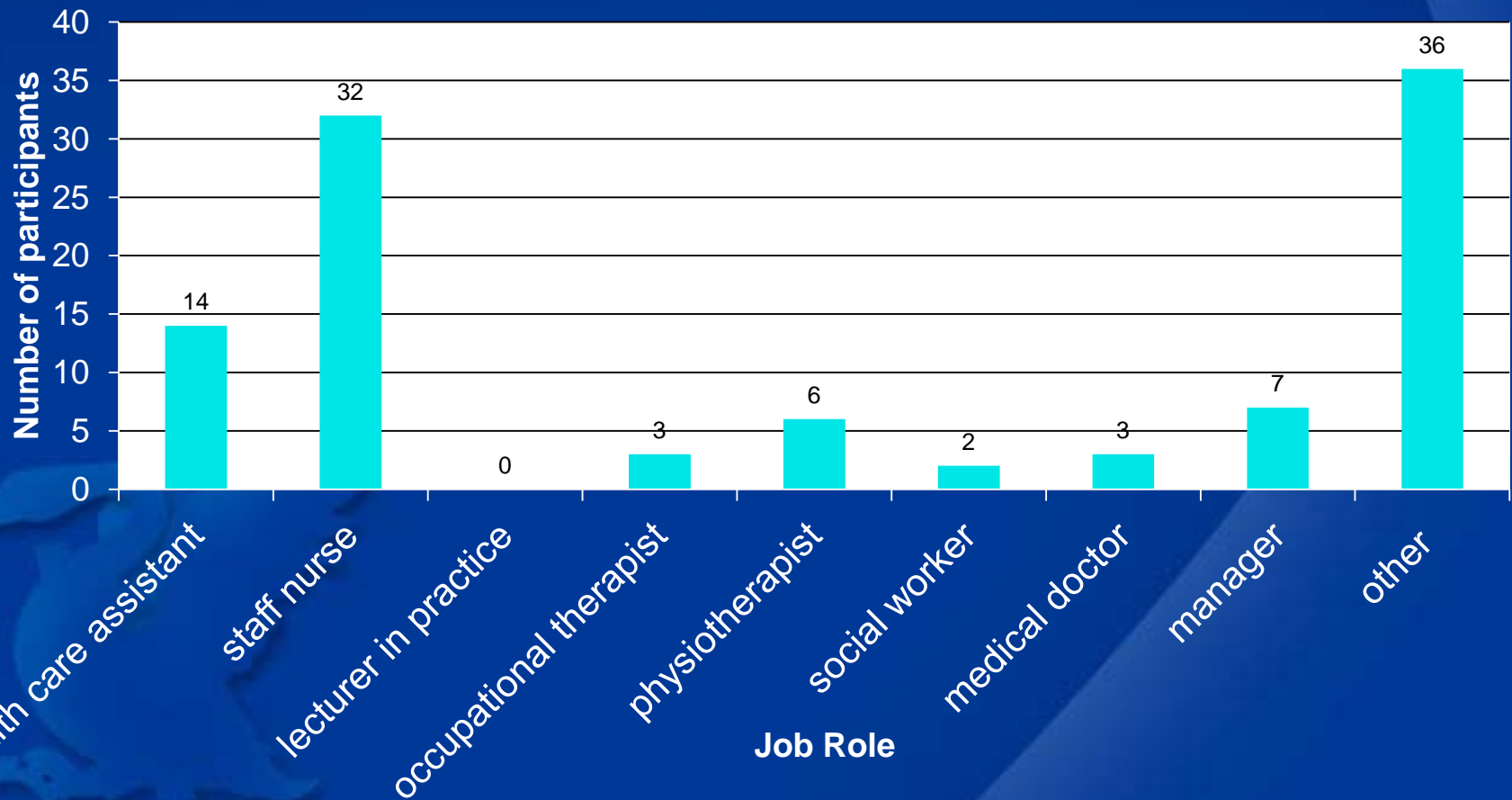
Survey

Recruitment to date

Trusts	Hard copies administered n	Hard copies returned n	Hard copy response rate	Online survey n	Total n
The Hillingdon Hospital	160	43	27%	0	43
Royal Berkshire Hospital	200	28	16%	3	31
Berkshire Healthcare	123	20	19%	0	20
Central and North West London	-	-	-	7	7
Other	-	-	-	2	2
Total	483	91	19%	12	103

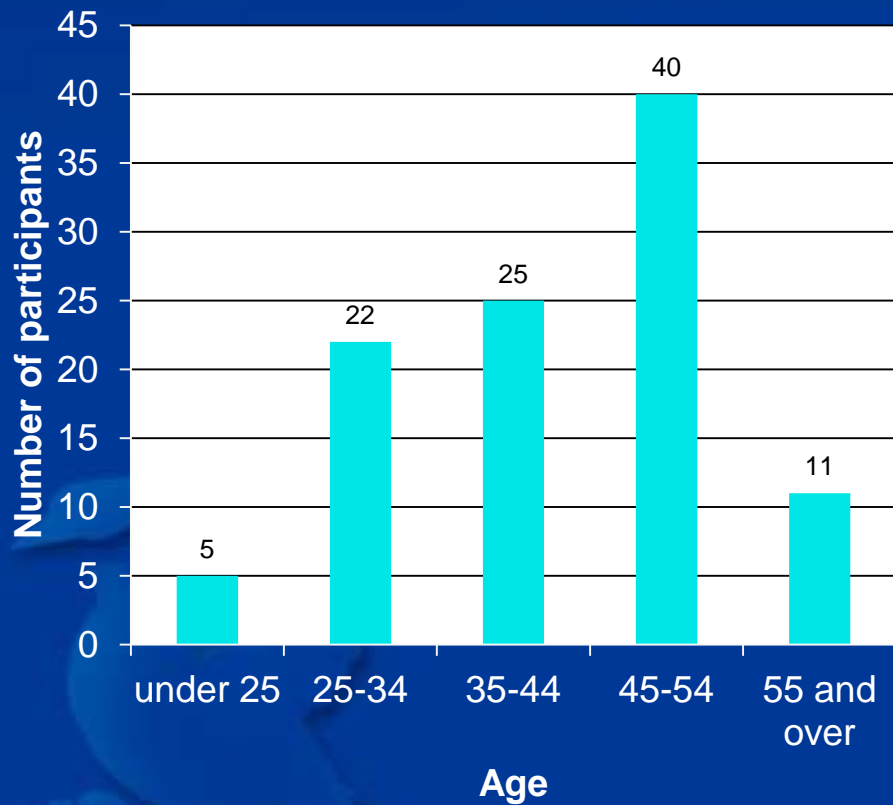
Profile of respondents

Job Role

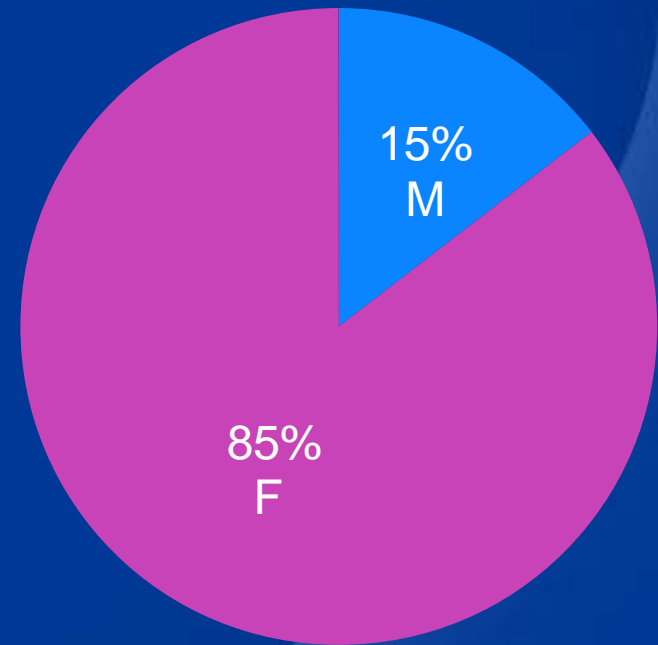


Profile of respondents

Age



Gender

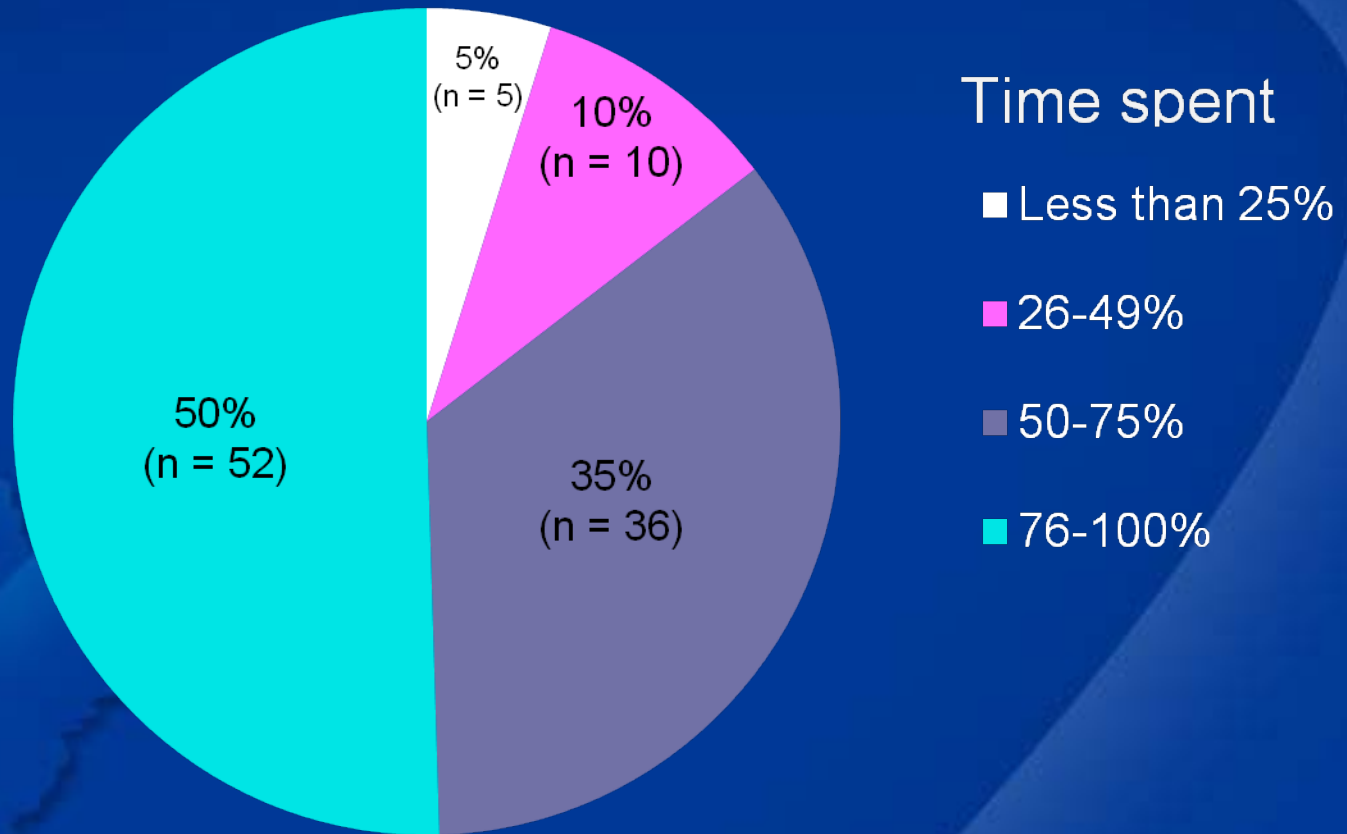


Survey Questions

1. How much work time is spent with older people?
2. What does dignified care mean to you?
3. What do you consider to be the most important aspects of dignified care?
4. What helps you to maintain and improve your ability to provide dignified care?
5. What prevents you from providing dignified care?



1. How much work time is spent with older people?



2. What does dignified care mean to you?

theme	n	Quote
Respect	39	<i>"Dignified care means treating patients with respect"</i>
To be treated as an individual	34	<i>"Individualised care based on the specific needs of each person"</i>
Involved in decision making	30	<i>"Patient focused, where possible involving them to take part in decision making regarding their treatment/care/placement"</i>
Privacy	30	<i>"to ensure that they are covered at all times and curtains are always drawn with a red peg on if a patient is having care"</i>
Care and Support	18	<i>"Ensuring that they are able to attend to, or are given support with activities of daily living"</i>
Treat as you wished to be treated	15	<i>"To be treated in a manner that you would expect to be treated"</i>
Safe environment	9	<i>"Dignified care to me is ensuring that the patient is in a safe environment"</i>
Empathy	2	<i>"Having the ability to empathize and understand the individuals predicament "</i>

3. What do you consider to be the most important aspects of dignified care?

(Rank: 1 = most important, 8 = least important)

Aspects of dignified care	Mean	Ranking
Treating a patient as an individual	2.20	1
Maintaining privacy when providing care at all times and in all places	2.81	2
Having time to talk and actively listen to patients	4.07	3
Responding promptly and professionally when patients ask for help	4.14	4
Providing adequate help with personal care (e.g. washing, clothing, toileting)	5.05	5
Addressing patients as they (or their carers) have asked to be addressed	5.17	6
Helping patients at meal times	5.30	7
Obtaining consent from patients for sharing information	7.26	8

4. Which of these would help you to maintain and improve your ability to provide dignified care?

(select 3 most important only)	Rating
Better staffing	1
Less work pressure	2
More time	3
Education	4
Support from your managers/organisation	4
Better work environment (e.g. equipment, cleanliness, space)	5
Integration of dignity into work philosophy	6
Peer support	7

5. What prevents you from providing dignified care?

“staffing levels - sometimes not enough to provide the quality of care you want to” (staff nurse)

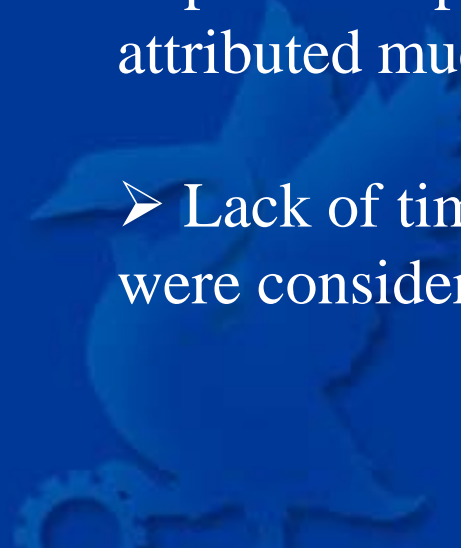
“too much pressure to document clinical observations frequently. Too much paperwork keep us away from patients bedsides for too long!” (staff nurse)

**“Lack of time and resources”
(physiotherapist)**

**“demands on time, unwell patients, lack of staff”
(health care assistant)**



Summary

- High percentage of time spent with older people
 - The meaning of dignified care appears consistent across participants
 - ‘Privacy’ and ‘Being treated as an individual’ were the most important aspects of dignified care while the physical tasks attributed much less importance.
 - Lack of time, too much work pressure and staffing levels were considered barriers to providing dignified care
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Thank you

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