

Dignity Conserving Care

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“Kindness, humanity and respect – the core values of healthcare are easy to overlook in the busy, high tech culture of modern healthcare “ says Dr. Harvey Chochinov. Yet, it is the humanity of healthcare that gives our work its meaning, helps us to work with patients to achieve the best possible health outcomes, and creates a lasting memory for the people we serve. The A, B, C, and D of Dignity Conserving Care, developed by Dr. Harvey Chochinov, is a tool that you can use to help practice the humanity of healthcare. As part of this approach, healthcare providers are asked to consider their attitudes and behaviors as follows:

Attitude

Ask yourself:

- How would I be feeling if I was this person?
- Why do I think and feel this way?
- Do I have the facts I need or am I making assumptions?
- Are my attitudes affecting the care I provide and, if so, how?
- Are my personal beliefs, values, and life experiences influencing my attitude?

Action to be taken

- Reflect on these questions as part of your everyday practice.
- Discuss provider attitudes and assumptions and how they can influence the care of patients with the care team.
- Challenge and question your attitudes and assumptions as they might affect patient care
- Help to create a culture that questions if and how provider attitudes are affecting patient care.

Behaviour

- Introduce yourself. Take time to put the patient at ease and appreciate their circumstances.
- Be completely present. Always include respect and kindness.
- Invite a family member to be present.
- Use language the patient/family can understand.

Compassion

- Get in touch with your own feelings about life and humanity.
- Consider the personal stories that accompany illness.
- Show your compassion with a look, a gentle touch, or some other way that recognizes the person inside the patient.

Dialogue

- Acknowledge the patient’s personhood.
- Get to know the patient. “What should I know about you to help me work with you.”
- “Who else do you want to be with you?”

This Practical Wisdom Adapted From:

Chochinov, H. (2007). Dignity and the essence of medicine: The A,B,C, and D of dignity conserving care. *British Medical Journal*, 335, 184-187.

Remember Your ABCD's

A

Attitude



Our beliefs about patients may affect them profoundly.

B

Behaviour



Our care of patients must always be based on kindness and respect.

C

Compassion



Our feelings about patients must be based on a deep awareness of their suffering and a wish to relieve it.

D

Dialogue



Our knowledge about patients must include who the patient is as a person.