

Can Health-care Assistant Training improve the relational care of older people? (CHAT) A development and feasibility study of a complex intervention

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

Health-care assistants (HCAs) provide much of the direct care to older people in hospital. Relational care is a term that describes elements of care such as respectful communication, maintaining dignity and polite forms of address. We set out to design a training course for HCAs to improve the relational care of older people. To understand what training is currently given to HCAs, we conducted a telephone survey of acute NHS hospitals in England. To establish what older people, HCAs and other staff who work with HCAs believe should be included in HCA training, we undertook group interviews with older people and individual interviews with HCAs and other staff. We found existing training to be highly variable, and focused on new rather than existing staff, with relational care not given a high priority. We produced *Older People's Shoes*, a training package designed to get HCAs to consider ways to get to know older people and understand the challenges that older patients face. To see whether or not we could formally test this new training for HCAs, we conducted a small experiment in which six wards from three hospitals were allocated the training and six wards were not. We wanted to see whether or not wards, HCAs and older patients would take part in the study and whether or not we could obtain the information needed to measure any difference the training might make. We successfully recruited wards, HCAs and patients. We concluded that a larger study would be possible, but changes would be needed to capture sufficient information (data).

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