A randomised controlled trial to evaluate the impact of a human rights based approach to dementia care in inpatient ward and care home settings

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Plain English summary

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This study aimed to explore whether or not training staff to use a new assessment tool called ‘Getting It Right’ could improve the quality of care provided in dementia-specific NHS wards and care homes. The assessment tool was based on human rights principles and explicitly linked person-centred care to the human rights FREDA (Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity and Autonomy) principles. The assessment tool and training were designed by and piloted at Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust. Staff members completed the assessment tool with residents on their unit and were offered booster consultation sessions to help them with any problems they encountered completing it.

Twenty sites were recruited to the study across the north-west of England (eight NHS wards and 12 care homes). These sites either received the intervention package described above (training, applying the ‘Getting It Right’ assessment tool and receiving booster sessions) or continued with care as usual. The measures were completed before the study began and after 4 months to see whether or not there were any differences in the well-being of people living with dementia and the quality of care provided. Staff members were also interviewed to look at whether or not the way that they made decisions had changed.

It was found that, although there were improvements in staff knowledge about human rights following the training, and staff expressed more positive attitudes towards human rights, there were no improvements in the care provided or in the well-being of people living with dementia. Staff also reported different decision-making strategies following the intervention.

Although staff generally reported that the approach was simple and easy to use, there was evidence that it had not been used routinely. Interviews showed that management support was an important factor in whether or not the approach was applied. Future research could focus on different ways of ensuring that people apply new initiatives.
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