

A framework and toolkit of interventions to enhance reflective learning among health-care professionals: the PEARL mixed-methods study

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Plain English summary

PEARL mixed-methods study

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Plain English summary

‘I could tell whether we would be spoken to each week by looking at the consultant rota’, said the daughter of a critically ill patient in the intensive care unit. ‘I was moved from one ward to another at 2.00–3.00 am. Nothing explained – very upsetting and frightening’ was a patient’s experience of the acute medical unit. By contrast, another patient reported that ‘everyone seemed happy in their work and demeanour which makes all the difference to us patients’. Empathic attitudes and behaviours can transform, both positively and negatively, the experience of health care for patients and staff. Reflective learning is mandated in the UK for health-care professionals to promote insight, empathy and understanding. However, reflective learning is not a simple and standardised activity, and the evidence that it ‘works’ in its current form is not strong.

The Patient Experience And Reflective Learning (PEARL) project builds on the desire of health-care staff to provide excellent care. We formed a collaboration of three acute medical units and five intensive care units in three hospital trusts to develop a novel theory of reflective learning using the experiences of patients and staff obtained from surveys, interviews and direct observations in the workplace. Using co-design by patients, staff and researchers, we created a range of locally adaptable tools that can be used by staff in their daily work to promote effective reflection and to use that reflection to improve care. We present this toolkit in the form of a box with sections for a formal introduction to reflection, mini guides for acquiring and using feedback to reflect individually or in groups, guides on reflection in daily practice, and a range of interactive resources. The toolkit encourages development and creativity to promote local ownership.

The toolkit requires formal evaluation in a subsequent randomised controlled trial across acute hospital trusts in England.

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