Faculty of Health Sciences

Fundamentals of Care

adelaide.edu.au
The Fundamentals of Care program, led by Professor Alison Kitson, is an international, multi-faceted program investigating how the fundamentals of care are delivered to patients within health systems.

The program was designed and developed to address the growing concerns and mounting empirical evidence regarding the poor delivery of fundamental care globally, which has resulted in patient safety threats, poorer and costly care outcomes, and dehumanising experiences for patients and families. Through international research collaborations, facilitated through the International Learning Collaborative (ILC), the aim is to develop the evidence base underpinning high-quality fundamental care and use this evidence to improve the way in which such care is delivered globally. The ILC is a member-based organisation with close affiliation to Green Templeton College, University of Oxford. Its members comprise international academics, clinicians and leaders who are dedicated to transforming the way in which care is delivered in high tech environments and to elevating the standard of fundamentals of care globally. The ILC has its home base within the School of Nursing at the University of Adelaide.

Defining and describing nursing activity around patients’ fundamental care needs

This stream involves developing a consistent, evidence-based understanding of and taxonomy for the fundamentals of care to enable the effective operationalisation and consistent implementation of such care in practice and education. Work has been undertaken to synthesise the available literature on fundamental care, with a meta-narrative review of seminal nursing texts identifying how fundamental care has been defined in the literature and practice to date. Expanding on this work, a conceptual Fundamentals of Care Framework was created by the ILC. Work is now being undertaken to refine and validate the framework against available empirical evidence. Dr Rebecca Feo, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, is leading this research, which will involve:

- developing a consistent definition of fundamental care;
- explicating the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of fundamental care;
- identifying the discrete fundamentals of care and how they should be defined and described; and
- developing methods for assessing and evaluating the fundamentals in practice.

This work will involve collaboration with members from the ILC. Work in the other three streams will also contribute to the empirical validation of the Framework.

Tagging systematic reviews according to fundamentals of care

The role of the Fundamentals of Care (FoC) Node within the Cochrane Nursing Care Field (CNCF) is to identify universal aspects of patient care as they relate to and potentially affect the application of the results of systematic reviews. The CNCF was established to provide a nursing perspective on Cochrane reviews and to promote their dissemination and uptake. The core functions of the CNCF include identifying topics for nursing care not currently addressed by Cochrane Reviews, raising awareness of the Cochrane Collaboration and the resources it has that support the delivery of nursing care, and the dissemination of relevant reviews to the nursing care community. Tiffany Conroy, Program Coordinator, Bachelor of Nursing (Post Registration) and Deputy Director, Centre for Evidence-Based Practice, is leading work around tagging systematic reviews according to the fundamentals of care.

Patients’ and clinicians’ experiences of the fundamentals of care and how they are delivered

The aim of this stream is to better understand how fundamental care is delivered by clinicians and experienced by patients, with a view to improving the delivery of such care in order to ensure patient safety and positive care experiences. A key component is an international project being conducted between the School of Nursing and researchers at Uppsala University, Sweden. The project, called SMAAP (Seamless Management of Patients Seeking Care for Acute Abdominal Pain), explores through repeated interviews how patients have experienced care for acute abdominal pain in acute care settings in both Sweden and Australia. The particular focus is on the delivery of fundamental care across the entire care episode, from presentation to emergency through to admission to theatre and the surgical ward. Clinicians’ experiences of delivering such care to patients across the entire care delivery chain will also be sought. These experiences will form the basis of an intervention designed to improve the way in which the fundamentals of care are provided to patients seeking care for acute abdominal pain in acute care settings.

Development and testing of interventions to improve the delivery of fundamentals of care

This stream will generate and use evidence surrounding the fundamentals of care to create, implement and evaluate interventions around such care in practice. The generation of evidence and the development of interventions is closely linked to work being undertaken in others streams. Elements of the Fundamentals of Care Framework are currently being tested against available empirical evidence. A project was recently undertaken to generate recommendations for nurses on how best to establish positive, trusting relationships with patients in practice, using evidence from an umbrella review undertaken by researchers within the School as well as the Fundamentals of Care Framework. These recommendations will be tested through focus groups with nurses and patients and subsequently implemented in practice. The intervention for the delivery of fundamental care developed as part of the SMAAP project will be implemented and tested within acute care systems in Australia and Sweden.