



Coma and Disorders of Consciousness  
research centre

# What is important to residents with neurological conditions and their families in rehabilitation and long-term care centres?

Julie Latchem and Jenny Kitzinger (2012)



## EXECUTIVE RESEARCH SUMMARY

Full report at: [www.cdoc.org.uk/publications](http://www.cdoc.org.uk/publications)

### The Research

This research examined residents' and family members' views on what is important in long-term care/rehabilitation centres for people with neurological conditions.

- The research involved interviews and focus groups with 33 residents and *family members* at three UK neurological centres.
- The *residents* who participated all had the mental capacity to consent to the research on their own behalf; the *family members* mainly had relatives with more profound mental and physical impairments.

### Key Findings

- 1. Positive relationships:** Participants emphasised, above all, the importance of staff friendliness, respect, caring and professionalism. Residents wanted to be known by staff personally, as an individual, and valued their relationships both with staff and other residents.
- 2. Good care and treatment:** High quality medical and nursing care were seen as central, alongside having physical needs met in a timely way and having access to therapeutic input, in particular, physiotherapy.
- 3. Touch:** Residents specifically discussed their needs for careful and skilled handling, and also for affectionate touch and the role this played in helping them to feel 'human'.
- 4. Choices:** Residents and family members emphasised the importance of residents having as much choice, control and independence as possible.

5. **Connectedness and meaningful activity:** Participants emphasised the importance of residents remaining connected to their social circles, the local community and the wider world wherever possible. Value was also placed on trips out, everyday in-house activities, organised events and socialising.
6. **Atmosphere and environment:** A positive atmosphere was seen as crucial including a sense of 'homeliness' and community. Space, noise levels, equipment, facilities and services (e.g. laundry, catering) were all deemed important. Residents and family members also highlighted the significance of security (e.g. in relation to physical safety and possessions).
7. Some additional issues raised by family members included stresses associated with funding issues, the importance of being able to input into decision-making for relatives who lacked capacity, the value of being welcomed as part of the centre's community and having staff who were willing to work with them to determine how best to support residents.
8. As well as identifying a high degree of consensus about what was important, the focus group discussions also captured tensions regarding balancing the need for independence versus security, routine versus institutionalisation and individual versus collective needs.

For an extended discussion of these findings with illustrative examples see Latchem, J and Kitinger, J (2015) 'Breaking down barriers: the importance of good relationships in long-term neurological care', *Nursing and Residential Care* 16(12): 513-514

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