

Declaration on: Patient-Centred Healthcare

Health systems in all world regions are under pressure and cannot cope if they continue to focus on diseases rather than patients; they require the involvement of individual patients who adhere to their treatments, make behavioural changes and self-manage. Patient-centred healthcare may be the most cost-effective way to improve health outcomes for patients.

To us, the International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (IAPO), the essence of patient-centred healthcare is that the healthcare system is designed and delivered to address the healthcare needs and preferences of patients so that healthcare is appropriate and cost-effective. By promoting greater patient responsibility and optimal usage, patient-centred healthcare leads to improved health outcomes, quality of life and optimal value for healthcare investment.



Patients', families' and carers' priorities are different in every country and in every disease area, but from this diversity we have some common priorities. To achieve patient-centred healthcare we believe that healthcare must be based on the following five principles:

1. Respect

Patients and carers have a fundamental right to patient-centred healthcare that respects their unique needs, preferences and values, as well as their autonomy and independence.

2. Choice and empowerment

Patients have a right and responsibility to participate, to their level of ability and preference, as a partner in making healthcare decisions that affect their lives. This requires a responsive health service which provides suitable choices in treatment and management options that fit in with patients' needs, and encouragement and support for patients and carers that direct and manage care to achieve the best possible quality of life. Patients' organizations must be empowered to play meaningful leadership roles in supporting patients and their families to exercise their right to make informed healthcare choices.

3. Patient involvement in health policy

Patients and patients' organizations deserve to share the responsibility of healthcare policy-making through meaningful and supported engagement in all levels and at all points of decision-making, to ensure that they are designed with the patient at the centre. This should not be restricted to healthcare policy but include, for example, social policy that will ultimately impact on patients' lives. See IAPO's Policy Statement at: www.iapo.org.uk/patient-involvement

4. Access and support

Patients must have access to the healthcare services warranted by their condition. This includes access to safe, quality and appropriate services, treatments, preventive care and health promotion activities. Provision should be made to ensure that all patients can access necessary services, regardless of their condition or socio-economic status. For patients to achieve the best possible quality of life, healthcare must support patients' emotional requirements, and consider non-health factors such as education, employment and family issues which impact on their approach to healthcare choices and management.

5. Information

Accurate, relevant and comprehensive information is essential to enable patients and carers to make informed decisions about healthcare treatment and living with their condition. Information must be presented in an appropriate format according to health literacy principles considering the individual's condition, language, age, understanding, abilities and culture. See IAPO's Policy Statement at www.iapo.org.uk/patient-information-and-health-literacy

To achieve patient-centred healthcare at every level in every community, the International Alliance of Patients' Organizations is calling for the support and collaboration of policy-makers, health professionals, service providers, and health-related industries to endorse these Five Principles and to make them the centre of their policies and practice. We call upon all stakeholders to provide the necessary structures, resources and training to ensure that the Principles outlined in this Declaration are upheld by all.