



Patient-centred healthcare

IAPO's mission is to achieve patient-centred healthcare. Patients have the right and responsibility to be meaningfully involved in health policy and decision-making at all levels. To do so, it is crucial that patient communities can rely on accurate, up-to-date information and work in collaboration with key partners in healthcare.

Introduction

In the global policy arenas, patient-centred healthcare is generally incorporated in the broadest concepts of people- and person-centred healthcare. The people using health services should be appropriately involved in healthcare to make sure it truly fulfills people's needs. As stated in the [Declaration by the International College of Person-Centered Medicine](#) (ICPCM), "to function in accord with the basic principle of intrinsic human dignity", healthcare systems need to be centred on people.

Identifying accurate measures for people- and patient-centricity is not an easy task given the concept's complex nature. In 2012, IAPO performed a review of the main [indicators](#) that are currently used to establish how patient-centred health services are. Gaining this type of understanding is crucial for patient advocates to strengthen their knowledge of health systems and identify areas on which to concentrate their advocacy activities more strongly.

Definition

[Patient-centred healthcare](#) identifies healthcare that is designed, organised, and practised with the patient at the centre. According to IAPO's [Declaration](#), patient-centred healthcare builds on five core principles:

- **Respect.** Every patient has unique values, preferences, and perspectives. A patient-centred healthcare system is one in which these differences are respected and valued.
- **Choice and empowerment.** Patients have the right and responsibility to be adequately and meaningfully involved in decisions concerning their own health.
- **Involvement in health policy.** Patients and patients' organisations share the responsibility to participate as equal partners in health policy making at all levels. Virtuous patient engagement allows for new, fresh, and unique perspectives to be included and accounted for in decision-making processes.
- **Access and support.** Patients must have access to safe, quality, and appropriate services, treatments, preventive care and health promotion activities.
- **Information.** Patients can only make well-grounded and informed decisions if they are able to rely on accurate and comprehensive information.

Policy landmarks

In the [Framework on Integrated People-Centred Health Services](#), the World Health Organization (WHO) looks at the integrated, people-centred approach to care as key to the development of health systems that are able to tackle “emerging and varied” challenges. A [report](#) by the High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth also highlights the “growing demand for integrated, people-centred, community-based health services and personalized long-term care”. An approach that is people-centred adds value beyond health and can stimulate economic growth.

The WHO Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) has developed a [policy framework](#) with the aim of identifying areas of reform for promoting people-centred healthcare. The WHO African Regional Office (AFRO) recently emphasised the need for the countries of the region to look at adequate investments “[for the provision of basic services to communities](#)” as a key pre-requisite for effective people-centred healthcare. In [The Patients’ Charter on Patient Empowerment](#), the European Patients’ Forum (EPF) maintains that meaningful patient-centred measures should be used to assess the quality of health services.

Advocating and collaborating for patient-centredness

The principles provide guidance as to how the concept of patient-centred healthcare is to be understood. But how can these principles be applied in practice to make healthcare systems truly patient-centred?

- **Systemic level.** The way the healthcare systems are shaped and regulated inevitably determines the quality of health outcomes. Patient groups can play a key role in ensuring that the declaration’s five principles are enshrined in health policies and regulation.
Key stakeholders to engage: Policy makers, industry representatives, institutional actors at global, regional, country and local level.
- **Health delivery level.** A patient-centred healthcare system risks being ineffective if regulation and policies are not appropriately implemented in practice. Patient advocates can help practitioners see the benefits of partnering and sharing responsibility with patients in decision-making. Good practice can also inspire and trigger change in policy and regulation.
Key stakeholders to engage: Medical professional and researchers.
- **Individual level.** Personalised care represents an effective way of acknowledging, respecting and valuing the uniqueness of every patient’s needs. However, if patients are to be part of the decision, they need to be able to do so at their best. This means developing the ability to seek information, assess its quality and credibility, and understand what skills and capabilities are needed to engage in healthcare. The **key stakeholders to engage** are... patients themselves!

How to move forward

The five principles of the IAPO Declaration showcase the core conditions that need to be in place for healthcare systems to be patient-centred. In advocating for these principles to be reflected in practice, patient communities will be called on to adopt a phased approach that is aimed to:

1. Identify the “healthcare level” towards which advocacy activities can best be directed.
2. Engage with key stakeholders and help them see the benefits of adopting a true patient- and person-centred approach to healthcare.

