

Worksheet 10:

The person-centred approach in dementia care

The person-centred approach in dementia care was initially developed by Tom Kitwood and the Bradford Dementia Group, University of Bradford, UK.

Kitwood argued that viewing people with dementia only in medical terms can lead to them being seen as 'objects' and as having no subjectivity or personhood. He argued that a person's experience of dementia not only arises from biomedical phenomena such as their degree of neurological impairment and their physical health, but also from social and psychological factors such as their personal biography and day-to-day interaction with other people.

Kitwood described the mutual contribution of biomedical and social/ psychological factors on the development of dementia as an equation:

$$D = P + B + H + NI + SP$$

Personality (P)

The unique characteristics of people will affect their ways of dealing with situations and events. Personality type (such as introvert or extrovert) will affect how people deal with loss and will add to or reduce the signs and symptoms associated with dementia.

Biography (B)

Life history shapes personality and how we have learned to respond to situations. So past experiences will affect current behavior and responses.

Health (H)

Our physical and mental health affects how we behave.

Neurological Impairment (NI)

Damage to nerve cells in the brain can impair the function of the body that is governed by the damaged area. However, it is essential to remember that many areas of the brain remain intact so people with dementia can retain many skills and abilities.

Social Psychology (SP)

This describes the way that interactions with others affect the emotional state of a person, and also the way that society's attitude to others with impairments can either enhance or limit a person's opportunity to be a part of that society.