

What is people-centred care and how does it apply to cancer?

(WHO global strategy on integrated people-centred health services)

People-centred care is an approach that adopts the perspectives and experiences of individuals, carers, families and communities as participants in, and beneficiaries of, trusted health systems that respond to their needs and preferences in holistic ways.

This approach represents a fundamental shift in how health and cancer services are designed and delivered, placing individuals, families, and communities at the heart of health systems.

Key elements of people-centred cancer care

- Focuses on the whole person, not just their cancer
- Involves cancer patients, families, and communities as active partners in care
- Coordinates cancer care across health services and settings
- Addresses physical, emotional, and social needs
- Empowers people and communities to manage their own health

Benefits of people-centred cancer care

- Improved quality of life for cancer patients and survivors
- Better health outcomes and patient experiences
- More efficient use of healthcare resources
- Reduced healthcare costs
- Increased patient and community satisfaction and engagement
- Strengthened community resilience and support networks

Community aspect of people-centred care

- Enables communities to voice their needs and influence care delivery
- Strengthens community capacity to organise and generate changes
- Promotes community-delivered care and involvement of community health workers
- Fosters social networks and mutual support systems
- Enhances health literacy at the community level

Distinctions in terminology

Patient-centred care: Respects a patient's feelings, values, and preferences about their own care. It emphasises the importance of treating patients as partners and can involve shared decision-making. The care is coordinated across different services and providers to help ensure that all aspects of the treatment are aligned, reducing

confusion and improving the overall experience. Patient-centred care specifically relates to the clinical context and interactions within a healthcare system.

Person-centred care: Expands the focus beyond the patient to the individual as a whole person and considers all aspects of their life, not just their disease. It values people's unique experiences and wishes, including psychological, social, and spiritual needs. It supports the individual in a holistic manner, taking their personal life, identity, and social context into account.

People-centred care: Takes the most valuable elements of the patient- and person-centred models and places them within the broader context of community. This model takes the widest possible view, as individuals actively participate in their treatment and their experiences and values are heard and respected, while it engages families, social connections, and wider communities as vital pillars of high-quality cancer care. It's also intended to address the health of entire populations, ensuring that healthcare systems are designed to serve all people equitably and inclusively.

Challenges in implementing people-centred care

- Fragmented health systems
- Lack of care coordination
- Limited resources in many settings
- Cultural and systemic barriers to patient and community engagement
- Insufficient focus on prevention and health promotion

Actions to advance people-centred care

- Develop national policies and strategies that include community involvement
- Strengthen primary care and community-based services
- Improve care coordination and integration at all levels
- Empower patients and communities through education and shared decision-making
- Invest in digital health technologies and data systems
- Train healthcare workers in people-centred care approaches
- Foster community partnerships and support networks