How to practise effectively

What is effective care? In the latest part of our series on the NMC Code, we explain what it means and how it works

Referring to the Nursing and Midwifery Council Code’s second theme – practise effectively; think what effective nursing care means to you and how this has an impact on the essence of quality care.

Now consider how a patient would describe effective care. You may be surprised at the differences. While healthcare staff often focus on clinical outcomes, patients put greater emphasis on respect, dignity and open communication.

It is an example of how all four parts of the Code come together. Your job as a nurse is to provide care that is clinically effective and which is perceived as effective by the patient.

As a student you are not professionally accountable, but you are responsible for your learning, especially on clinical placements. It is vital that you are reflective and ask yourself if you are delivering safe, effective care which is in the best interest of your patients. Specific areas to consider include:

- How do you keep up to date with current guidelines and evidence? Are there newsletters to sign up for or websites to subscribe to?

- How do you inform yourself of relevant best practice when you are on a placement?
- Who should you approach if you encounter bad practice that could result in harm to a patient, member of public or staff member?
- How is it best to share information and knowledge with classmates and colleagues? Do you like to talk

through situations face-to-face or online?

- What role do you take in a team? Are you a leader or do you like to absorb what’s happening before taking action?
- What is your natural communication style? How comfortable are you being open and honest with patients? What extra training would help you become a skilled communicator? Would you benefit from motivational interviewing or assertiveness skills?
- How do you take constructive feedback?

Setting standards

You are on a continuous learning curve as you gain knowledge, skills and competencies to become a registered nurse who practices and revalidates according to the Code. You can pick up good habits from other nurses and professionals on your placements.

Remember that the standards of care you set yourself as a student will determine the quality of nurse you will become. You will work alongside nurses who maintain high standards and offer invaluable learning opportunities. However, you may also encounter outdated practices and should be prepared to challenge them.

Students may find it difficult to address these situations as standing up for yourself can be stressful. Try to seek the support of your mentor, other senior staff or university tutors, and use these examples in written reflective accounts to maximise your learning and build foundations for effective, career-long practice NS

By Mandy Day-Calder, freelance writer and life/health coach

The Code’s practise effectively statement

- The care, information and advice you give must be evidence based.
- You must maintain appropriate skills and knowledge throughout your career.
- Verbal, non-verbal and written communication must be clear, easily understood and sensitive to the varying needs of others.
- Work respectively as part of the wider nursing and healthcare teams, sharing skills and knowledge when necessary.
- The safety of those in your care is paramount.
- You are responsible and accountable for all aspects of care you give, withhold and delegate.