

PERSON-CENTERED CARE FOCUSES ON THE PERSON FIRST

The principle of personhood and dementia care was first introduced in the early 1980's at the University of Bradford UK by Dr. Thomas Kitwood, founder of the Bradford Dementia Group. Kitwood defines personhood in his book *Dementia Reconsidered* as: "...a standing or status that is bestowed upon one human-being, by others, in the context of a relationship and social-being. It implies recognition, respect and trust."

Saint John's employees learn "Person-First" as a set of principles and practices that guide the care and service approaches through knowing and honoring the person before the task. These practices provide the basis for creating a daily life worth living, striving to nurture the mind as well as the spirit and promoting growth and development for all.

How does Person-First set Saint John's apart from traditional nursing home care?

For generations, the nursing home "way of life" has been a strong medical model where elders no longer control such basic pleasures and rights as when they wake up in the morning, what they eat, how they spend their time and when they go to sleep.

Often when residents lose their ability to care for themselves, caregivers focus only on the resident's physical comfort and safety. Caregivers save time by doing everything for the elder rather than allowing them to help themselves. The caregiver is often unaware of the individual's life, personal accomplishments and preferences.

Saint John's has transformed the institutional approach to nursing home care into a social model within community living. Saint John's focuses on individualized care rising from the individual needs of each person and allowing residents to direct their own care – even when they have lost cognitive abilities.

Megan Hannan, MS, an associate with Action Pact, a consulting group devoted to culture change for seniors in long term care, and creator of the "Person First" dementia care model, provided train-the-trainer sessions for Saint John's employees. In Person-



First, the aim of caregivers is to honor residents by finding ways for them to participate and help the caregiver. Hannan explains in her training that many believe incorrectly that people afflicted with dementia cannot participate in self-directed, person-centered care or decision making. In our learned experience with small community circles and through

a document called “Windows into the Past, Present and Future,” where caregivers get to know the resident’s story or life history, caregivers help residents to communicate and gain more control of their own care. In a culture change transformation the structure changes where by the decision making is closer to the residents by empowering the caregivers to help make decisions.

How does the Person-Centered philosophy benefit resident’s health?

Saint John’s philosophy focuses on the strength and wellness of an individual in contrast to focusing on illness. Our care giving team no longer wears uniforms because traditional hospital scrubs or white nursing uniforms imply illness. This has made a difference in how residents feel about themselves in their environment. Waking up each day in a place they call home, where relationships between residents, family and staff are valued, is beneficial to an individual’s health.

Person-Centered Care is giving choice to individuals

One of the most dramatic choices given to residents by caregivers is the opportunity to rise naturally. The institutional/medical model way of doing things is to begin getting all residents up as early as 5 a.m. in order for them to be in the dining room, dressed and ready to receive their breakfast tray by 7:30 a.m. (tray - meaning no choice). At Saint John’s, residents can get up whenever they wish, have breakfast anytime they wish and breakfast is made right in the kitchen next to the dining room in the neighborhood, where a variety of choices are available each and every day.

Food is an important part of the resident’s daily life. If a resident expresses a desire for a certain food, it is not unusual for a staff member to run out to a local restaurant to pick up the food of choice whether it is fried chicken, a hamburger, Chinese or barbeque ribs.



Another example of Person-Centered Care is choice in how care is delivered. The nurses enter into a care-giving relationship with the resident and family. If a resident chooses a course contrary to medical advice, the nursing staff will honor the resident’s wishes while balancing these wishes with best practices in regard to legal and ethical obligations.