

# Dignity of Risk

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A Balance of Risk and Duty

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# Acknowledgement

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NorthWestern Mental Health

# Objectives

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- Define 'Dignity of Risk'
- Historical background
- Relevance to Mental Health Act 2014 and to mental health clients
- Literature
- Barriers & Facilitators
- Recommendation for practice

# Dignity of Risk

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- ‘Positive risk-taking’ & ‘therapeutic risk-taking’
- A concept that...
  - Recognises risk-taking as an essential component of learning and growth
  - Respects an individual’s right to take reasonable risks
- Often applied in
  - Mental health
  - Aged care
  - Disability support services

Robert Perske



*'The Dignity of Risk and Mentally Retarded'* (1972)

OVERPROTECTION




# Literature

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- Limited research
- Downes et al., 2016
  - Risk-taking perceived as vital for recovery
  - Ambiguity exists
- Higgins et al., 2016
  - Low confidence level in integrating positive-risk taking into practice

# Mental Health Act 2014



Assessment and treatment are provided in the least intrusive and restrictive way

People are supported to make and participate in decisions about their assessment, treatment and recovery

**Individuals' rights, dignity and autonomy are protected and promoted at all times**

Priority is given to holistic care and support options that are responsive to individual needs

The wellbeing and safety of children and young people are protected and prioritised

Carers are recognised and supported in decisions about treatment and care



# What it means for a client

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- Person-centred
- Respect
- Freedom to make choices
- Opportunity for learning and growth
- Expressing what matters
- Process rather than an event
- Responsibility for a meaningful life



# Barriers

Individual	Organisational
Fear of unknown	Bureaucracy
Anxiety	Funding and research gap
Individual perception of risk	No fixed framework
Lack of trust in clients	Lack of rewards
Allegations	Process driven
Fear of losing job / registration	Staffing level

# Jumping barriers

Individual	Organisational
Change in perception of 'risk'	Organisational change
Mutual understanding	Changing philosophy of care
Rapport, building trust	Managerial support
Instilling a sense of hope	Utilise technology
Frequent contact	Providing fund and research
Ax of client	

# Act of Balance

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- Capacity
- Cognitive ability
- Reasonable
- Support and monitoring
- Impact on others
- Team effort
- Legal boundaries
- Caution – Does not mean all risks are good or should be accepted



# Take-home message

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- In a recovery-oriented practice, risk is not to be considered as merely something to be avoided
- Essential component of recovery
- Promotes self-determination, autonomy, opportunity for learning and growth
- Mental health nurses face uncertainty and dilemma
- Gap in evidence
- Act of balance

# Recommendations for practice

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- Individual level
  - Need a new, recovery-oriented perspective of 'risk'
- Organisational level
  - Education on benefits of positive-risk taking
  - Risk-embracing culture
- Multi-organisational level
  - Call for further research
  - Evidence of benefits of risk outweighing failure

# References

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