Dignity of Risk

A Balance of Risk and Duty

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Acknowledgement

NorthWestern Mental Health
Objectives

• 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

• ‘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

• 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

- 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Organisational</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of unknown</td>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Funding and research gap</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual perception of risk</td>
<td>No fixed framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of trust in clients</td>
<td>Lack of rewards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allegations</td>
<td>Process driven</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear of losing job / registration</td>
<td>Staffing level</td>
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Jumping barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Organisational</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in perception of ‘risk’</td>
<td>Organisational change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual understanding</td>
<td>Changing philosophy of care</td>
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<td>Rapport, building trust</td>
<td>Managerial support</td>
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<td>Instilling a sense of hope</td>
<td>Utilise technology</td>
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<td>Frequent contact</td>
<td>Providing fund and research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ax of client</td>
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Act of Balance

- 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

• 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

• 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


