“Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink”

The constant conundrum of older peoples care

Dr Trish Hafford-Letchfield
Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day

Hungry to be heard (Age Concern, 2006)

Dignity and nutrition inspection programme, Care Quality Commission, 2012

‘Compassion in practice for nurses, midwives and care staff’ DoH, 2012

Treating patients and service users with respect, dignity and compassion, DoH, 2013


Hospitals on the edge? The time for action, Royal College of Physicians, 2012

Ombudsman Report, 2006

Human Rights in Healthcare, DoH, 2008
Water is vital to life

Not just a risk factor in recovery but an abuse of human rights

- Fluid deprivation as a symbol for system failures
- ‘Unoticing’ environments
- Ageing population as a game-changer
- Despite considerable guidance, protocols and action plans, these issues persist?????
Human Rights

• **Article 2**: The right to life

• **Article 3**: The right not to be tortured or treated in an inhuman way or degrading way - Inhuman treatment means causing severe mental or physical suffering

**Relevant issues in care**
- Malnutrition and dehydration in care settings
- Physical or mental abuse
- Over medication, inappropriate medication
- Use of physical restraint
- Soiled linen, clothing
- Leaving trays without helping patients to eat where they are not able to feed themselves
- Separation of partners and lack of intimacy
- Lack of dignity and confidentiality

*From Dennis and Allen, (2011)*
Speaking from care

**Contextual**
- High thresholds and stringent eligibility criteria with insufficient investment in prevention
- Dilemmas of how failing services are supported
- Ageism, structured dependency (Townsend, 2006) and revolving debates on the cost rather than the assets from an increasingly ageing population.
- Participation and citizenship

**Professional**
- Persistent evidence that Older People are the least preferred group that SW students want to work with.
- Neglect is the most unreported form of abuse within safeguarding policies and practice.
- Challenges and dilemmas in older people’s care are more frequently framed as problems of inadequate or inappropriate service provision, poor service standards, or difficulties of multiagency joint working, morality.
Moving to the edge of new frontiers?

1. How can education and research at Middlesex equip professionals with the necessary knowledge, skills and values to work with the changing needs of a diverse ageing population?

2. To what extent are education and research equipping care professionals to work effectively with older people within the current practice context and what cross disciplinary knowledge and research might we draw upon?
References
