



An evaluation of patient empathy within the Allied Health Profession in an acute hospital using the Consultation and Relational Empathy Measure

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Empathy is thought to be a fundamental component of all therapeutic relationships⁽¹⁾ and a key element in patients' definition of quality of care⁽²⁾. The Consultation and Relational Empathy (CARE) measure is a type of patient-rating empathy measure, where patients assess their carer's empathy after clinical consultation⁽²⁾. The CARE measure is a ten statement questionnaire which is answered by patients using a five-point scale from poor to excellent⁽³⁾. The maximum CARE score attainable is 50. The aim of this study is to assess the level of empathy of the Allied Health Professionals (AHP) in St James's Hospital as perceived by patients using the validated CARE measure.

To date 197 subjects were recruited from Dietetic outpatient clinics and 100 subjects from Physiotherapy outpatient clinics. Greater than 50 subjects provides the most reliable and representative picture of patients' perception⁽⁴⁾. Surveys were distributed directly after consultations. To avoid bias, questionnaires were completed by the patients themselves or with the assistance of the student researcher if needed. Data was inputted on the CARE website, which calculated CARE scores. CARE scores were analysed per profession, medical speciality and individual therapists.

Table 1. Overall results for the Allied Health Professions in St James's Hospital

Allied Health Professions	Number of Subjects	CARE Score	Percentile range of AHP	Average for Profession	Percentile range
Physiotherapy	100	47.8	50 th -75 th	47.5	50 th -75 th
Dietetics	197	49.2	75 th -90 th	46.6	50 th -75 th

The Results show excellent empathy, as the CARE scores for Physiotherapy and Dietetics are above average with a range between the 50th-75th percentiles and the 75th-90th percentiles. The CARE scores can identify if AHP's would benefit from further training in cognitive behavioural therapy or patient empathy. The results highlight the exceptional responsiveness and empathy shown by Dietetics and Physiotherapy staff and enhance the AHP-patient relationship whilst improving patient enablement.

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