

Respecting Choices® Definition of “Person-Centered Care”

For over three decades, Respecting Choices (RC) has been a leader in assisting health systems, organizations, and communities to successfully develop and implement best practices for advance care planning (ACP) and shared decision making (SDM). In parallel, the concept of person-centered care (PCC), a common phrase used today, originated in the early 1960s to change traditional paternalistic medical care (clinician as expert, illness as a problem, and wholeness being equivalent to fixing, curing, or absence of disease) to a clinician-patient partnership in care. Despite the long history of PCC, there is not a commonly used definition and organizations continue to struggle in operationalizing PCC. Early on, RC recognized the significance of PCC as a foundational component of its ACP and SDM programs. To date, PCC key elements are integrated into the ACP and SDM activities within each RC program. RC recommends that when organizations can systematically integrate and practice ACP and SDM activities as a routine part of care, they are more likely to achieve the outcomes of PCC. To support the alignment between the RC ACP and SDM programs and the delivery of PCC, RC modified its brand in September 2016 to “A System for Person-Centered Decision Making That Transforms Healthcare.”

RC advocates that PCC ultimately exists when an individual’s goals, values, beliefs, and preferences are heard, known, and understood. Once identified, self-defined goals guide all aspects of medical and non-medical care needs and support an individual’s definition of health, well-being, life meaning, and purpose. PCC is achieved through an ongoing relationship among individuals, family, caregivers, and the care team. Care team members who are competent in motivational interviewing and communication skills can deliver an authentic clinician-patient relationship that supports collaborative SDM and ACP in which care desired is in concordance with care provided.¹⁻⁷

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