



Background

Our health and care system is under significant pressure. Demand for health and care services is increasing and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need to make best use of the resources we have and provide better value care for patients.

Value in healthcare

We know that not all healthcare interventions are valued by all patients. Some of the recent increase in the volume of clinical practice is healthcare-led, and not all of this is person-centred. We need to understand and tackle this by, for example, reducing overuse of tests and interventions and by avoiding low value treatment and care, or waste. Low value and futile tests and treatments lead to more patient regret and exposure to unnecessary harm such as exposure to radiation from imaging, risks from procedures, and side effects from medication.

Over investigation and overtreatment doesn't just risk harm, it is also wasting our precious healthcare resources that could be better used elsewhere. On the other hand, there is also underuse of some tests and interventions which are very high value, and that is often linked to inequality of access to services. Decreasing low value tests and interventions allows resources to be redeployed to meet these unmet needs and improve outcomes more equally for our population.

Realistic Medicine

We know that if people are fully involved in decisions about their care, they are far more likely to value the treatment they choose. This reduces waste and potential harm. Practising Realistic Medicine can help us deliver a change in culture where healthcare professionals have a clear, forward looking vision to deliver value based healthcare.

Value Based Healthcare (VBH)

The definition of Value Based Healthcare (VBH) includes the provision of high-quality care combined with personalised care, where healthcare professionals work in partnership with the people and populations they care for, providing care based on what matters most to them. Value based healthcare is not about saving money or delivering efficiencies. It's about healthcare professionals working with the people they care for, to consider whether a treatment or an investigation is going to be of value. Only by discussing the evidence, the risks and the benefits of the test and treatment options and personalising care will we be able to optimise the use of our precious healthcare resources and reduce harm and waste.