



# "Small Gestures, Big Impact: A Systematic Approach To Service Excellence In Nursing"

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## Abstract

Patient experience is increasingly recognized as a critical indicator of healthcare quality. The Service Excellence Toolkit was developed to strengthen compassionate, relationship-centred nursing care through simple, structured activities that promote meaningful patient–nurse interactions. This paper presents a narrative synthesis of the service excellence toolkits implemented by the department of Nursing of Apollo hospitals group and examines its relevance to contemporary nursing practice. The toolkit includes initiatives such as “A Touching Note,” “Small Takeaways,” “Little Prayers,” “Thank a Patient (TAP),” “Wish of the Day,” and child-friendly engagement strategies aimed at alleviating anxiety and fostering healing. The article outlines the conceptual basis, implementation process, expected outcomes, and its alignment with existing evidence on empathy, communication, and psychosocial support in healthcare. These service excellence initiatives testify that structured compassionate care interventions can enhance patient satisfaction, trust, emotional comfort, and overall healing experiences.

**Keywords:** Service excellence, compassionate care, patient experience, therapeutic communication, nursing practice, patient-centred care.

## INTRODUCTION

Compassionate care is foundational to nursing practice and is strongly associated with improved patient outcomes, patient satisfaction, and emotional well-being. Healthcare institutions are increasingly adopting structured programs to strengthen the humanistic dimensions of care. The Service Excellence Toolkit provides a systematic framework aimed at enhancing the quality of interpersonal interactions between nurses and patients, reinforcing caring behaviours, and fostering meaningful connections.

## NEED FOR THE STUDY

Despite advancements in clinical technology and care delivery, patients frequently report unmet emotional needs, communication gaps, and feelings of depersonalization during hospitalization. Nurses, as frontline caregivers, are uniquely positioned to influence patient perceptions through everyday gestures of kindness, attentiveness, and empathy. There is a need to explore structured approaches that integrate compassion into routine practice, making it consistent, scalable, and measurable across nursing teams.

The Service Excellence Toolkit holds potential as a practical model to re-humanize healthcare experiences. Understanding its components, expected outcomes, and alignment with evidence-based practice can help nurse leaders strengthen patient-centered care strategies, elevate service culture, and improve patient loyalty and satisfaction.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Empirical studies affirm the clinical and psychosocial impact of compassionate care. Hennessy et al. (2020) describe compassion as a therapeutic modality that improves patient trust and reduces anxiety. Similarly, Sinclair et al. (2018) report that compassionate interactions enhance healing outcomes and help patients feel understood as individuals.

Small gestures—including touch, eye contact, and attentive listening—have been shown to significantly influence patient perceptions (Lineaweaver, 2019). The use of prayer or spiritual support, when aligned with patient preference, contributes to emotional resilience according to the National Library of Medicine, where randomized controlled trials demonstrate prayer's potential healing benefits in holistic care (Wachholtz & Pearce, 2009).

Paediatric literature emphasizes the importance of play therapy and distraction techniques in reducing procedural anxiety and emotional distress (Koller, 2017). Creative interventions such as art, dress-up activities, and cartoon-based distractions have been shown to promote coping, engagement, and comfort during hospitalization.

Collectively, the literature supports the central idea of the Service Excellence Toolkit: that compassionate, personalized, creative, and spiritual care interventions contribute significantly to patient satisfaction and well-being.

## NURSE DRIVEN COMPASSION FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSFORMING PATIENT EXPERIENCE

A structured Service Excellence Toolkit was developed by the Group Director of Nursing, Capt. Dr. Usha Banerjee, outlining comprehensive strategies for implementing service excellence activities across all Apollo units nationwide. The toolkit emphasizes key concepts such as compassion, effective communication, meaningful patient-provider bonding, spirituality, paediatric engagement, and overall patient experience.

### Strengthening Patient–Nurse Emotional Connection

#### 1. A Touching Note

- Nurses write personalized notes conveying empathy, appreciation, and support.
- Notes are read aloud to patients, enhancing emotional resonance.
- Leadership involvement in placing initial notes promotes culture ownership.

#### 2. Small Takeaways

- Simple artifacts (handmade flowers, cartoons, quotes) serve as tokens of care.
- These gestures reinforce that patients are valued beyond their clinical needs.

#### 3. Little Prayers

- Nurses offer spiritual support tailored to patient preferences.
- Prayer is integrated throughout the patient journey—admission, procedures, discharge, or death.

## Creating Meaningful Patient Experiences

### 1. Thank A Patient (TAP)

- Nurses express gratitude toward patients, recognizing their courage, cooperation, and resilience.
- TAP notes promote positivity and strengthen mutual respect.

### 2. Wish of the Day

- Nurses identify and fulfill individual patient wishes (e.g., favorite food, video calls, festival requests).
- Activities enhance patient empowerment, joy, and sense of importance.

### 3. Lasting Impressions Framework

- Emphasis on eye contact, attentive listening, confident introductions, and gentle touch.
- Staff encouraged to exceed expectations, creating memorable patient experiences.

## Paediatric Engagement and Anxiety Reduction

### 1. Dress Up Relay

- Children dress as favourite characters to promote joy and reduce fear.

### 2. Cartoon Distraction for Pain and Procedural Anxiety

- Creative covers for IV bags (e.g., Medi Teddy) reduce procedural distress.

### 3. Drama Dazzle and Painting Spree

- Magic shows, art activities, clay craft, and creativity enhance emotional well-being.





Fig1: Touching note



Fig 2: Small takeaways



Fig 3: Creative covers for IV bags



Fig4: Painting activity



Fig 5: Little prayers

## DISCUSSION

The Service Excellence Toolkit aligns closely with global research emphasizing the importance of empathy, communication, and spirituality in patient-centered care. The activities described—such as personalized notes, prayer, and small takeaways—mirror findings from Sinclair et al. (2018) that compassion involves presence, emotional resonance, and meaningful gesture.

Pediatric-focused strategies echo literature on therapeutic play. Koller (2017) notes that distraction and imaginative activities significantly reduce fear and improve participation during medical procedures.

The TAP and Wish of the Day activities are rooted in positive psychology, which suggests that recognizing strengths and fulfilling meaningful desires enhances motivation and emotional comfort.

The integration of prayer reflects a holistic model of care, consistent with evidence suggesting spiritual practices help patients cope with uncertainty and illness (Wachholtz & Pearce, 2009).

Overall, the toolkit operationalizes compassion into concrete actions, making it teachable, measurable, and scalable.

## CONCLUSION

The Service Excellence Toolkit provides a structured, evidence-aligned approach to enhancing compassionate care in nursing. By operationalizing empathy into simple, actionable practices, the toolkit strengthens patient–nurse relationships, improves patient satisfaction, and fosters a healing environment. The thematic analysis demonstrates that authentic, meaningful interactions—backed by creativity, gratitude, and spiritual support—leave lasting impressions and improve the overall care experience.

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