

VIEWS OF INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMS IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE ON OUTPATIENT NURSING CONSULTATIONS

Background

In Europe, mental healthcare services are continuously evolving to meet the growing and increasingly complex demands for specialized mental health care (MHC) provision. Also in Flanders inpatient services has partially been transformed into outpatient and home care. This increases the pressure on outpatient services that already struggles with long waiting times/lists?. Consequently, patients may not receive MHC in time. An outpatient nursing consultation could help to fill in this treatment gap.

Aim(s)

The study aimed to gather the attitude and views of different mental health care workers (nurses and other MHC professionals) towards mental health care nursing consultation (MHCNC) as a new concept of care to be introduced in daily MHC practice.

Methods

An explorative qualitative research was conducted, based on individual semi-structured interviews with fifteen mental health care professionals from different inpatient services. A thematic analysis was performed to reveal emerging patterns and themes.

Results

Three main topics emerged from the data: content, purpose and conditions for MHCNC. The content of MHCNC should focus on the meaning of living with mental health issues for the patient and their family, how to support the patient and help (practical, emotional or hand-in-hand guidance) the patient in organizing and conducting their daily life while dealing with mental health issues. The MHC nurse should translate treatment advice into the patient's daily life and consolidate it. The MHC nurse is easily accessible, provides timely care and continuity by playing an important role in assessing the patient's condition and collaborating with MHC professionals when needed. Before the implementation of MHCNC several conditions such as the nurse's competencies and training, interprofessional collaboration and organizational concerns e.g. financing and staffing may need to be fulfilled.

Discussion

The research has identified the MHC professionals' views on mental health care nursing consultations (MHCNC) in outpatient care. Despite the concept of MHCNC is still rather unknown to MHC professionals, they believe that MHCNC may partially play a role in relapse prevention, early intervention and preventing hospital (re)admission. Nurses' education, competence, legislation, staffing and financing are subjects of concern.

Implications and future perspectives

Since the study, the hospital, where the study was conducted, has used these findings to set up MHCNC for patients with eating disorders or OCD. Patients and involved MHC professionals are very positive about this new concept of care. In future studies, objective outcomes around the MHCNC still have to be studied.

References

1. Van Cleemput et al. *Hoe kijken interdisciplinaire teams in de geestelijke gezondheidszorg naar een ambulante verpleegkundig spreekuur? Een exploratief kwalitatief onderzoek*. Master's thesis, 2020
2. Van Cleemput et al., *De visie van interdisciplinaire teams op een ambulante verpleegkundig spreekuur*. Tijdschrift voor Psychiatrie; accepted for publication on 2nd May 2023.