

22/07/15

Authors:

Stephanie Learmonth

Dr Polyxeni Christodoulou

Dr Faisal Sethi

PICU length of stay and clinical outcomes audit

Background

Much of the literature examines recidivism to psychiatric intensive care units (PICUs) rather than looking at other patient outcomes following PICU admission. There is currently a paucity of research into length of stay, where patients are discharged to, and post-discharge outcomes. Current guidance states that the length of stay at a PICU should not usually exceed 8 weeks (Department of Health, 2002).

Aim

The aim of this audit was to compare the length of stay at a female PICU against the Department of Health's guidance, and to examine the acute care pathway alongside patient's physical location 6 weeks post-discharge.

Methodology

Patient data from internal records was gathered from patients who were recorded as having stayed at the PICU between October 2014 and March 2015 ($N = 50$). Data was analysed using excel and SPSS.

Results

The average length of stay on the PICU was 26.5 days. Three patients exceeded the Department of Health's recommended length of stay, 2 patients exceeded this by 1 and 2 days respectively. One patient exceeded the guidelines by 3 weeks due to severity of illness. At discharge 86% of patients went to general acute treatment settings, 6% to home treatment teams, 4% to forensic, 2% to perinatal and 2% to a private bed. At the 6 week follow-up date 4% of patients had returned to the PICU, 52% were in the community, 4% were absent without leave and 36% were in acute treatment settings.

Conclusions

Whilst 3 patients exceeded the Department of Health's 8 week guidance, in comparison an alternative study reported an average length of stay of 34.3 days, with 6 patients exceeding 8 weeks (Brown and Bass, 2004). This audit has an average stay of 8 days less and 3 patients fewer than the alternative study's findings. Furthermore, the current acute treatment pathway of this PICU appears to be successful in returning patients to the community. This audit highlights the need for further research into length of stay and patient outcomes after being discharged from a PICU.

References

1. Brown, S. & Bass, N., 2004. The psychiatric intensive care unit (PICU): patient characteristics, treatment and outcome. *Journal of Mental Health*, 13(6), pp. 601-609.
2. Department of Health., 2002. *Mental Health Policy Implementation Guide. National Minimum Standards for General Adult Services in Psychiatric Intensive Care Units (PICU) and Low Secure Environments*: Department of Health.