The Characteristics of Women in Psychiatric Intensive Care

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What we did

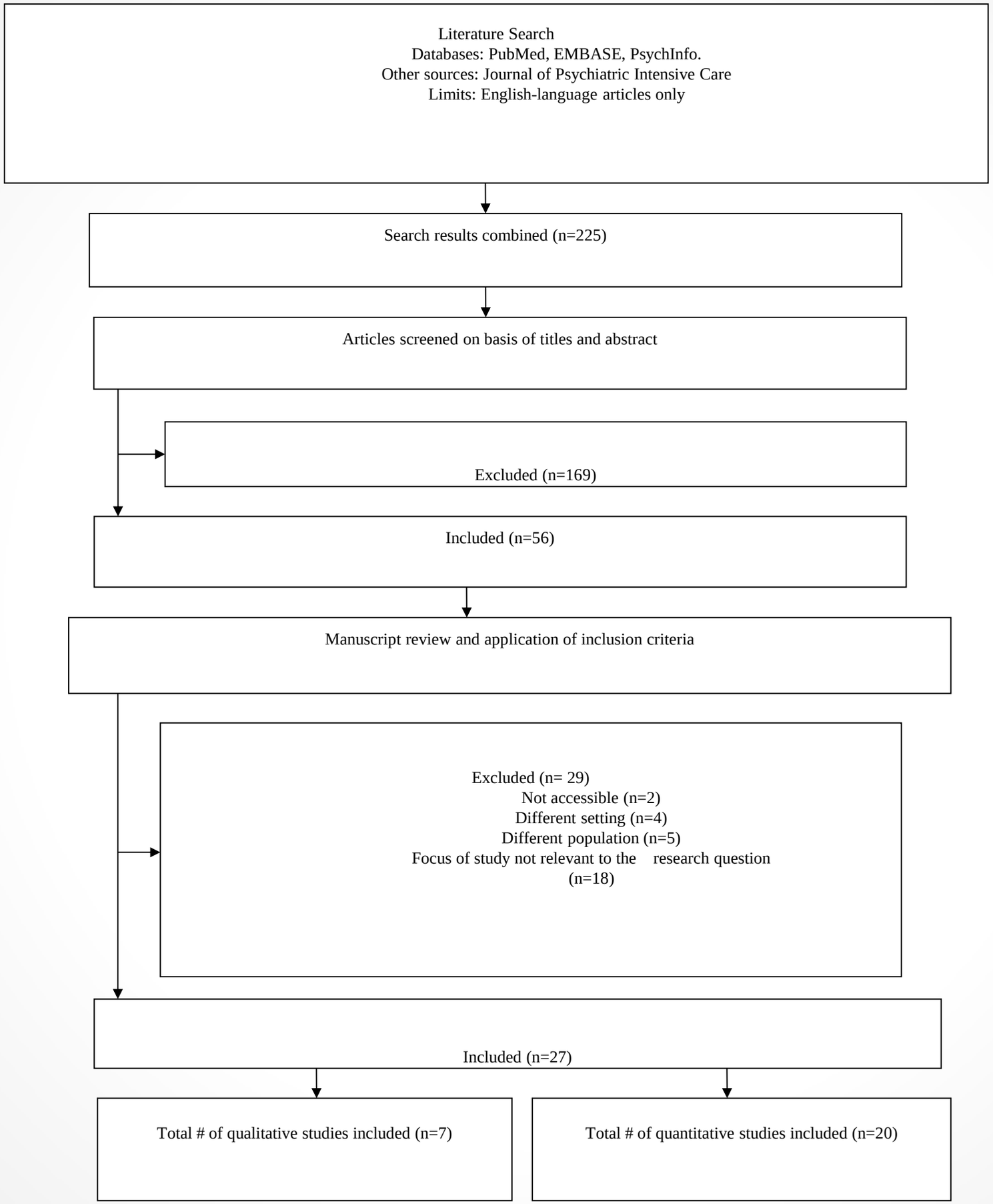
- Started project in 2013
- Looked at a literature review and policy review
- Incident data
- Clinician Survey

Why women's needs?

- The Department of Health highlight the need to develop gender-sensitive psychiatric services.
- However, research conducted in PICUs is usually with males
- 'one size fits all' model is not gender sensitive
- Women are major users of healthcare systems and report more health issues
- By understanding the specific needs of women in secure settings, can lead to a positive impact in their treatment outcome and quality of life

Literature review

- Databases systematically searched using the following key terms: *PICU, psychiatric intensive care unit, secure, ward, gender, gender-sensitive, difference$, women, female$, psychiatric, serious mental illness, acute mental disorder.*
- Included qualitative and quantitative studies.
- Not limited to UK studies in order to include a more international picture of women's needs.


Literature Search
Databases: PubMed, EMBASE, PsychInfo.
Other sources: Journal of Psychiatric Intensive Care
Limits: English-language articles only
Search results combined (n=225)
Articles screened on basis of titles and abstract
Excluded (n=169)
Included (n=56)
Manuscript review and application of inclusion criteria
Excluded (n= 29)
Not accessible (n=2)
Different setting (n=4)
Different population (n=5)
Focus of study not relevant to the research question
(n=18)
Included (n=27)
Total # of qualitative studies included (n=7)
Total # of quantitative studies included (n=20)

Main conclusions from Literature Review

- The need for good interpersonal relationships with staff! Awareness of attachment difficulties, and linked with safer ward environment.
- Having a clear routine and structure, and a full activity programme – important for a safe and settled environment.
- Higher rates of comorbidities with other mental health problems (e.g. personality disorders and anxiety disorders), also histories of abuse or trauma and self harm more common.
- Complex factors linked with poorer outcomes.

Recommendations from Literature Review

- Increased relational security – due to higher level of risk involved with caring for women. This emphasises more individualized levels of security, skilled nursing care and psychological therapies.
- Importance of providing high level of staff support, training and supervision – able to safely contain and manage complex problems.
- Providing gender-informed training – can greatly improve experience and recovery process for patients.

Policy Review

- Policies and legislations systematically searched and reviewed from 1998-2013
- Academic and clinical databases were searched
- Key words: women's needs, policies, psychiatric intensive care, inpatient.
- Policies focusing on specific needs for women or were around gender sensitive care were within the inclusion criteria.

Findings from the Policy Review

- Found 14 relevant policies
- Thematic analysis found 7 themes around:

  -Physical and mental health needs

  -Ward Design

  -Involving women in care planning

  -Whole system approach

  -More ‘female centred’ therapies

  -Appropriate use of medication

  -Staffing

Incident Data Analysis

- Reviewed retrospective data, originally derived by entering an incident on Datix Limited.
- 3 male PICUs vs. 1 female PICU, incidents over the year 2013.
- Only the incidents under the category 'Violence and Aggression' were obtained.
- Undertook quantitative analysis on risk incident forms.

Findings from the Incident Data

- Found an association between gender and incidents of: aggression, physical assault, threatened assault, verbal assault.
- Females displayed less acts of violence and aggression incidents.
- Furthermore, no significant associations found between gender and sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Clinician Survey

- A survey completed by clinicians on a female PICU and the answers were explore thematically.
- Developed using literature and policies around gender sensitive care.
- Opportunity sampling over five months, placed on a female PICU with over 40 clinicians within the MDT.
- 8 questions surrounding topics of: the ward environment, the treatment programme, therapeutic milieu and the needs of women in PICU.

Findings from the Clinician Survey

- Staffing: therapeutic alliance, training
- Treatment needs: physical healthcare, providing alternative female centred therapies, acknowledging women's role as mothers and caregivers
- Ward environment : security, privacy and dignity
- Risk management

Summary

- Holistic
- Individualised
- Taking into account physical, social, psychological factors and life events
- Staff-patient therapeutic alliance
- Ward environment

Limitations/ main areas for further research

- Retrospective study
- Lack of literature on gender differences in PICU. Suggests a lack of awareness of characteristics and needs of this group of women.
- For example - analysing gender differences in risk profiles and outcomes within PICU, or interviewing staff and service users to gain their views on what women requiring intensive psychiatric care need

Thanks for listening

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Reference:

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