

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Objectives**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the phenomenon of repeated use of emergency psychiatric service in Hong Kong and to identify the associated patient characteristics

### **Methods**

This was a retrospective study of hospital record files, from which data were collected for all patients who received urgent psychiatric consultations at the Accident and Emergency Department of Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital in Hong Kong from 1st January to 31st December 2004. Each patient was monitored for six months after the index consultation to identify the occurrence of subsequent consultations. The patients were divided into two groups: single-episode and multiple-episode (more than one consultations). They were compared on sociodemographic, clinical and consultation characteristics. The time interval between index and second consultations was studied by means of survival analysis (Cox regression analysis) which could identify the significant factors contributing to the occurrence of second consultations.

### **Results**

Over a six-month monitoring period, 139 (14.9%) of 933 patients were multiple-episode patients, accounting for 28% of all (1103) urgent psychiatric consultations. Multivariate Cox regression analysis generated a final model of six significant factors associated with repeated service use: psychiatric diagnosis, past psychiatric service, number of previous psychiatric hospitalizations, illicit drug abuse, poor adherence to out-patient care and social welfare service with financial assistance.

### **Conclusion**

The results shared some similarities to the findings in western studies, in terms of the level of repeated service use and the patient profile, yet there were differences in some aspects, such as absence of significance in male gender and young age group. It is hoped that the identified pattern may assist policymakers in more cost-effective service planning to address the unmet needs of this group of patients.

**Keywords:** emergency; emergency psychiatry; psychiatric emergency; psychiatric service; repeater