

Abstract

Title: A study of new long stay psychiatric patients in Hong Kong

Aims

To study the characteristics of new long stay (NLS) psychiatric patients, and identify the factors predicting discharge.

Method

A sample of adult psychiatric in-patients in a regional general hospital, with length of stay (LOS) 6 months to 3 years was studied and followed up for six months. Assessment instruments used included: BPRS, SANS, GAF scale, physical health index (PHI), problem behavior checklist, and social contact and support schedule. The outcome measures were patient's status and place of living at 6 months follow up.

Results

148 NLS patients (104 men and 44 women) were identified. The prevalence rate was 6.65 per 100,000. The mean age was 42.4 years. Schizophrenia (78%) was the commonest diagnosis; 38% of them had history of violence. 26% had history of failed community placement. 39% were living in closed ward, and 11.5% were formally detained. The mean LOS was 17.5 months. 60% had waitlisted community residential placement. 11% refused to leave hospital and 57% had no social support on discharge.

Male NLS patients were more often singles ($p=0.024$) and had history of violence ($p<0.01$). Female patients had better social support ($p=0.02$) and more favorable outcome.

Younger NLS patients (aged 18-34) were predominantly single men with history of violence (47%), and less likely to be discharged. Older NLS patients (aged 55-69) had less social support ($p<0.0001$) and more physical disability ($p<0.0001$).

At six months follow up, 25% (n=37) were discharged, but 16% (n=7) were readmitted; 46% (n=68) were still waiting for community residential placement in hospital. The predictors of discharge status were GAF score (p=0.001) and attitude on discharge (p=0.007).

Conclusions

This study confirmed that NLS patients had significant discharge problems. Adequate resources were needed for successful community rehabilitation. The accumulation of NLS patients to become long stay deserved more attention.