

29TH WORLD PSYCHIATRISTS MEET

DECEMBER 07-08, 2017 DUBAI, UAE

Referral patterns to psychiatry intensive care unit, Phoenix Care Center

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Background: Phoenix Care Centre is the only Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit in Ireland. This mental health facility was opened in May 2013. Phoenix Care Centre provides a tertiary service for patients who require an intensive care setting for the treatment of acute episodes of their mental illness within a locked therapeutic environment. Phoenix Care Center covers a population of 1.8 million within the catchment areas of Dublin, Wicklow and the North-East region. Over the last 20 years, a small group of patients has shown to be difficult to manage in a General Hospital setting. Risks leading to referral include significant aggression, risk of assault, actual assault and absconding.

Aim: The aim of this study is to identify the referral pattern to a Psychiatry Intensive Care Unit in Ireland and to demonstrate the diagnosis, mean length of stay, gender and the indication for referrals over a 2-year period.

Method: A retrospective chart study was carried out over admission to the PICU in the preceding two years. All patients admitted between January 2014 and January 2016 to the PICU formed the study group (n=67). Information concerning patient's characteristics was obtained at the time of admission. This included gender, mean length of stay, indication for referral and the ICD 10 diagnosis.

Results: Based on the data collection, there was a higher rate of referrals of males to the Phoenix Care Centre [Males: (n=45) and Females: (n=22)]. The incidence for females was higher as they reach the 4th decade of their life compared to males who had a higher incidence in the 2nd decade of life. Both male and female referrals gradually decrease in incidence as they age.

Conclusion: Males referred most frequently had a diagnosis of schizophrenia (57.8%) compared to females who most commonly had a diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder (45.9%). Personality disorder and affective disorder were the least referred diagnoses for both female and males. Assaults was the most common reason for referral in both males and females, sexual assault and those with a history of absconding were less common.

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