



Service Priorities and Programmes
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Submitting author: Dr Pik Ho, Jenny LAM

Post title: Associate Consultant, Castle Peak Hospital, NTWC

Realist Evaluation of the Psychiatric Consultation Liaison Nursing Service in the Accident and Emergency Department

Lam PHJ(1), Cheng CW(2), Chan CY(3)

(1),(2),(3) Department of General Adult Psychiatry, Castle Peak Hospital

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Introduction

Psychiatric consultation liaison nursing (PCLN) is a subspecialty area of the psychiatric nursing service that provides direct care of patients in general hospitals and consultative, collaborative and educational work to healthcare professionals. Its development in Hong Kong has become increasingly significant after the establishment of the Emergency Medicine Wards under Accident and Emergency Department (AED) recently.

Objectives

This project evaluates the effectiveness of the PCLN service in an AED using realist evaluation, a theory-driven evaluation which separates programs into context-mechanism-outcome configurations (CMOC)s.

Methodology

The potential CMOCs of the PCLN service are developed and a hypothesis is generated as a middle range theory (MRT). It is tested by a questionnaire survey and focus group. The MRT is then refined for specification of the local model.

Result

The MRT of the local service is "The PCLNs are regarded by the AED staff as independent, competent mental health specialist consultants who are trustworthy and easily accessible. They provide autonomous practice comparable to psychiatrists and are substitutes of them to provide a more timely assessment and disposal of the patients. Their main value is the provision of case consultation through effective communication and realistic recommendations. The roles in liaison and administrative consultation are limited due to time constraint and lack of recognition. The service leads to improvements of the AED service in the organizational level." This study demonstrates the potential for effectiveness and performance of the PCLNs in the AED. Trust, subject to the presence of good teamwork based on sound communication. However, their role is mostly restricted to case consultation while knowledge sharing and liaison work is under-developed. From a management perspective, evaluation of the readiness to change is required before role expansion

is supported.