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THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT UNIT ;A NOVEL METHOD FOR ASSESSING NEW INPATIENTS

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Introduction: The Mental Health Assessment Unit (MHAU) is a gateway between community services and in-patient services. It aims to provide an acute setting in which to assess patients within 72 hours, with the view to reducing in-patient hospital admissions. We aimed to ascertain the number of referrals made to the MHAU and admissions over a one month period. The presentation and length of stay was investigated and the diagnosis and follow up plans made were explored.

Method: Data was collated from a one month period. Crisis and home treatment team (CRHT) notes were reviewed.

Results: 100 referrals were made to the MHAU; 48 patients were admitted. 25 patients had care coordinators. In the majority of cases the source of referral was through the Emergency Department. There was a range of presenting complaints. Diagnoses included a wide variety of nature and severity. Average length of stay was 2 nights. Patients deemed to require in-patient management had shorter length of stay with swift transfer to treatment units. Shorter stays were also associated with milder degrees of illness. Longer length of stay was associated with more complex illness.

37 patients were discharged home, 11 were transferred to in-patient treatment units. Most patients discharged home were followed up by the CRHT.

5 patients were admitted to the MHAU more than once. This may represent a subgroup of more complex patients.

Conclusion: We recommend study into patients' experiences with care coordinators at times of need. We also plan to re-audit for a longer time frame.