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FREQUENT USERS OF AN ACUTE PSYCHIATRIC INPATIENT UNIT: A 5-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

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Introduction: A small subset of patients with above average admissions to psychiatric inpatient units is recognized in clinical practice. These frequent users tend to be younger and to have a diagnosis of schizophrenia or affective disorder. Social conditions and the severity of the illness seem to be associated with this increased number of admissions.

Aims/Objectives: To study demographic and clinical characteristics of frequent and non-frequent users of a psychiatric inpatient unit.

Methods: Retrospective data of all the patients admitted to a psychiatric inpatient unit from January 2004 to December 2008 were reviewed. Frequent-users were defined as patients with 3 or more admissions over that period of time, and non-frequent users as those with less than 3 admissions. The two groups were compared in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, psychiatric diagnosis and compulsory admissions

Results: In a total of 2018 admissions and 1348 patients, the frequent-user group represented 10.2% (n=137) of the patients and 28.9%(n=584) of the admissions. Frequent-users were significantly younger (39.5 vs. 44.5 years, p=.001), more frequently black (22.6 vs. 19.4%, p< .001) and compulsorily admitted (27.7 vs. 14%, p< .001) than non-frequent users. Patients with bipolar disorder (p=.001), schizophrenia (p=.003) belonged significantly more to frequent-users group, while unipolar depressive patients (p=.016) and other diagnosis (p=.011) was more significantly represented in the non-frequent users group. Frequency of admission did not differ with gender.

Conclusions: The results concerning age and psychiatric diagnosis are consistent with previous studies. Compulsory admissions and black ethnicity were significantly higher among frequent- users.