

P03-523

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION ON ADMISSION TO AN ACUTE PSYCHIATRIC INPATIENT UNIT, HOW OFTEN IS IT DONE?

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Introduction: Certain studies in 1986 & 2004 reported that recording of physical examination carried out on admission by psychiatric trainees to be 'uniformly poor' to 'variable'.<sup>1</sup>

Aims: The aim was to re-audit the recording of performing a physical examination on psychiatric inpatients at the time of admission.

Objective: To identify the reasons for the inability to physically examine psychiatric patients on admission.

Methods: We reviewed 30 case notes retrospectively each time, following admission, data was collected in December 2008 and June 2009. Ten patients from each ward (3 wards) were selected randomly.

Results: The percentage of patients having a physical examination on admission rose from 67% in December 2008 to 83% in July 2009. 13% of patients each were examined the next day, leaving 20% and 4% of the patients respectively, who were not examined within 72 hours of admission. The general trend (full & partial examination) in July 2009 was improving when compared to December 2008, with general inspection being done in 66% as compared to 56%, cardio-vascular examination 94% as compared to 77%, Respiratory examination 83% from 76% and central nervous system in 83% as compared to 63%. The rate of abdominal examination and baseline blood tests dropped from 73% to 67% and 93% to 73% respectively. 73% had baseline ECG in 2009 compared to 60% in 2008.

Conclusions: We are also looking at the availability of staff and examination equipments on the wards and suggest this should be the aim of future studies.