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SHARED CARE BETWEEN SPECIALIZED PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES AND PRIMARY CARE - THE EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATION OF PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS IN IRELAND

V.O.I. Agyapong<sup>1</sup>, C. Conway<sup>1</sup>, F. Jabber<sup>2</sup>, A. Guerandel<sup>3</sup>, F. O'Connell<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>St Patrick's University Hospital, <sup>2</sup>Central Mental Hospital, <sup>3</sup>St Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin, Ireland

**Objective:** The study aims to explore the views of primary care physicians in Ireland on shared care of psychiatric patients between primary and secondary services.

**Methods:** A self-administered questionnaire was posted to a random cross-section primary care physicians working in Ireland. Data were compiled and analyzed using descriptive statistics and analysis of variance.

**Results:** 145 out of 300 questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 48%. Overall, 77.9% of respondents reported that they completed a psychiatric rotation as part of their general practice training. Most General Practitioners expressed confidence in their ability to recognize and manage psychiatric disorders in primary care (on a confidence scale of 1 to 5, mean was 3.97, SD 0.699). There was a statistically, significant difference in confidence scores between those who had took a rotation in psychiatry as part of their GP training and those who did not, with the former reporting higher scores (4.04 vs. 3.72,  $F=1.801$ ,  $t=2.363$ ,  $p=0.02$ ) Regarding shared care, 95.8% of GPs were in favour of a formal shared care policy; however 42.8% expressed reservations regarding the implications of implementing such a policy. The most frequently expressed concerns related to the lack of resources in primary care for psychiatric patients (55.9%) , financial implications for some patients (48.3%) , and concern over communication with psychiatric services (42%).

**Conclusion:** The majority of Primary Care physicians in Ireland would support a policy of shared care of psychiatric patients'; however they raise some concerns regarding practical implications of such a policy.