The Leavers Group: Preparation and Progress of Patients Moving on from a High Security Hospital

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Introduction

For the majority of high secure patients, discharge is a necessary part of treatment and rehabilitation, and a goal of the care pathway. Patients are very rarely released straight back into the community; instead the majority progress to a Medium Secure Unit (MSU) (Adshead, Charles, & Pyszora, 2005). Offender patient narratives suggest mixed feelings of ambivalence, uncertainty and anxiety towards the prospect of discharge to lower security settings (Maine & Gudjonsson, 2005; Pescoisolido, Wright & Lutfey, 1999) with reported problems of being labelled as a high security offender patient; removal of former high secure privileges and difficulties in developing new therapeutic alliances (Skelly, 1994), that in some cases lead to acting out for the purposes of facilitating a return to high security.

The Leavers Group delivered at the Centralised Groupwork Services, Broadmoor hospital, was established on the basis the leaving process may be stressful and complex, particularly for patients for whom leaving high security may mean leaving the first secure base they have ever had and a community in which they are known and taken seriously (Adshead et al., 2005). The group was set up to give patients the opportunity to think about the leaving experience and benefit from being with patients going through the same transition.

The current study aimed to investigate group membership, why patients would be referred and the progress of group graduates who have been discharged compared to those that did not attend the Leavers group.

Method

Participants

1) male patients referred to the Leavers Group since its inception in 2003
2) male patients in the hospital not referred over the same time period
3) Clinical team Link Psychologists

Procedure

1) Leavers group members were described across individual characteristics and discharge progress
2) Leavers group graduate discharge progress was compared with progress of non-Leavers patients
3) Clinical team decision making for referral to the Leavers group was collated

Results

Who attended the group?

• 81 patients attended the group (includes 7 still attending)
• 74 have graduated (completed), of which 71 were discharged
• 2 (2.8%) were re-admitted, 3 (4.2%) returned from trial leave

Patients that attended the group were predominantly:

• admitted from prison (60.5%)
• had index offences of Homicide (37.0%)
• had a primary ICD-10 diagnosis of Schizophrenia (65.3%)
• were on a 37/41 (restriction order) section (42.0%)

No significant differences were found between graduates who remained discharged (n=66) and those that returned (n=5), on forensic or clinical characteristics.

Session attendance dosage

• mean 14.64 (SD = 17.81); range XX

What was the discharge progress of Leavers group graduates compared to non-Leavers group patients?

Leavers group graduates had approximately a 50% risk reduction (RR) of re-admission / return from trial leave (T/L).

Discharge: RR 0.528 CI -0.65 – 1.05; p = 0.41
Trial leave: RR 0.504; CI -0.43 – 1.10; p = 0.31

Most commonly recorded reasons for return to high security for ALL patients since 2003?

Further assessment / treatment needed; increased clinical risk; violent or aggressive behaviour; possession of substances.

What are clinical teams (n=11) reasons for referring a patient?

To discuss anxieties about moving
To planned pathway group
To reflect on being ready to leave
Intricate stayers
Encouragingly, only 5 (7%) of the 74 patients who participated in the Leavers Group have since returned to the hospital. On initial investigation, patients who did not access the Leavers Group were twice as likely to return from trial leave or be readmitted than those who did attend the group. Further comparison work is warranted to partial out any bias of individual differences and co-occurring components of care and therefore confirm the contribution of the Leavers Group in the transition process.

Discussion

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