

WAST Mental Health Pathway

Edward O'Brian

a18eob@hotmail.com

Project method

A simple pathway was designed to improve the quality and clinical appropriateness of care provided to mental health patients that access the ambulance service. It was apparent that many patients calling 999 presenting with a possible mental health problem were in fact having an acute reaction to an event and did not require urgent help. These patients were invariably conveyed to the ED and had to wait for an assessment before subsequently getting discharged, often without need for treatment. More importantly, those patients accessing WAST with an urgent need for help from mental health professionals were also getting conveyed to the ED, they were also having to await arrival of mental health services for assessment. This wait in the ED was inappropriate and often added to the current distress felt by the patient.

Direct access to the crisis team from the Paramedic on scene was facilitated to engage a mental health professional at the earliest opportunity. This phone call from scene would result in one of three actions being recommended: 1) Discharge at scene with signposting and advice; 2) Convey to a mental health facility for immediate assessment or 3) Convey to the ED

Project results/evaluation

Since December 2014, when service went live with the pathway in Cardiff and Vale UHB, 213 patients accessed the pathway, Of that 170:

144 were discharged at scene with signposting or clinical follow up arranged

26 admitted directly to mental health unit

43 taken to ED for mixed reasons, including intoxication, overdose and medically unfit

Those patients with an urgent need for help were seen in a far more timely and appropriate fashion in a mental health facility. Regular audits show the number of patients now avoiding the ED remains within the 80-90% range.

Project area classification

Hospital care		Emergency care	x
GP care		Dementia	
Social care		Learning disability	
Voluntary sector		Other mental health	x
Financial services		Palliative care	
Police		Advance planning, LPAs	
Legal		Commissioning	
Community health care		Training	
Nursing and care home		For professionals?	x
Acute care	x	For public and service users?	
Chronic care			