

Changes over time in symptoms, social participation and self-esteem between participants treated in a psychiatric day hospital and hospitalized

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Introduction. Psychiatric day hospitals have been a treatment and rehabilitation option for adults and seniors presenting a wide spectrum of acute psychiatric illnesses for several decades. Occupational therapists play an important role in this service, as program planners of therapeutic groups and treating clinicians. Effectiveness of day hospitals remains unclear, with diverging results. Self-esteem and social participation are important recovery outcomes that have been only partially examined. **Objective.** Compare the clinical and social participation changes in participants treated in a psychiatric day hospital for adults and seniors with clients hospitalized. **Methods.** A quasi-experimental design was used (T1: first week; T2 : five-eight weeks post T1; T3: six months post T2). The experimental group was composed of clients treated in a Canadian psychiatric day hospital (n=40). The comparison group included clinically similar clients hospitalized in the same institution (n=13). The target day hospital offered time limited and intensive medical, psychotherapeutic and rehabilitative group and individual interventions. The psychiatric hospitalization units focused on medical treatment, support and psychoeducation. Occupational therapists mainly played a consultant evaluative role. Main inclusion criteria were to be 18 years old and over, have a DSM-IV psychiatric diagnosis and score between 21 and 60 on the Global Assessment of Functioning Scale. The dependant variables included: sociodemographic characteristics, symptoms, social participation and self-esteem. Statistical analyses consisted on testing the differences between the two groups at all times. **Results.** At baseline, there was no significant difference on sociodemographic, clinical and functional variables between the two groups. Between T1 and T2, the degree of improvement was greater in the day hospital group regarding perceived severity of symptoms, self-esteem, global accomplishment and satisfaction in social participation ($p<0.05$). Between T2 and T3, there was no significant difference in the degree of change between the two groups on all variables. **Conclusions.** The day hospital demonstrated superior effectiveness during treatment than hospitalization. After, there is an overall stable evolution in the two groups. **Contribution to practice.** The therapeutic interventions offered in the day hospital by the multidisciplinary team, including occupational therapists, appear to have beneficial effects on the recovery of participants.