

The Effect of an Occupational Therapy Mental Health Day Treatment Centre on the Use of Inpatient Services in The Western Cape, South Africa

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The high number of mental health care users requiring care, the quick turnover in psychiatric hospitals and the scarcity of community-based mental health services are some of the factors that have led to a dramatic increase in the number of high frequency users of inpatient psychiatric services. In an attempt to address these issues, an occupational therapy-led day treatment centre (OT day centre) was established at Stikland Hospital in the Western Cape province of South Africa.

Objective: To determine whether attendance at an OT day centre for mental health care users affects the use of inpatient services.

Method: A pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental study design was used to compare the number of admissions and number of days spent in hospital as inpatient for a 24 month period before and after attendance to an OT day centre among mental health care users (N = 44).

Results indicated a significant decrease in the number of admissions ($z = -4.093$, $p = .00$) and the number of days spent in hospital ($z = -4.730$, $p = .00$). The total study population were admitted to psychiatric care 33 times less in the 24 months post intervention. They also spend 2569 days less in hospital. This indicated a medium effect size ($r = .436$) for number of admissions and a large effect size ($r = .504$) for number of days spent in hospital after intervention.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that an OT day centre is effective in reducing the use of inpatient services within the Western Cape, South Africa.