

Trends in activity participation in a Forensic Population of Mental Health Care Users in Gauteng, South Africa

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Introduction: Minimal research on the changes in activity participation in a forensic psychiatric population is available. This additional sub-section of mental health care caters for a population with specific needs. The factors that impede on the prognosis of a Mental Health Care User (MHCU) with a criminal offence are not well documented but institutionalisation is an obvious barrier to improve participation in everyday life. A study was conducted to track change in a forensic population at a South African forensic psychiatric institution to document trends in the rehabilitation process and determine the effect of institutionalisation.

Objective: This presentation will focus on the trends in activity participation across time and different diagnostic groups.

Methodology: Outcomes research with a simple pre-post design was employed with three occupational therapists using the Activity Participation Outcome Measure (APOM). The sample was 62 randomly selected forensic MHCUs. Each MHCU was assessed three times over 5 months.

Results: The trend in change in activity participation was minimal. An initial negative change was observed, followed by a positive change in the MHCUs' level of functioning. Differences in diagnostic groups were in congruence with general prognostic patterns. The group of MHCUs with a diagnosis of Intellectual Disability showed the lowest activity participation scores and those with Bipolar Mood Disorder, the highest scores.

Conclusion: This study confirmed that institutionalisation remains a problem in a forensic psychiatric population and also indicated the specific activity participation domains requiring attention. Recommendations to counteract the detrimental effects of institutionalisation will be presented.