

Alleviating occupational deprivation on a psychiatric ward in Fiji

Joanne Robertson, Elizabeth Koroivuki, Ashneel Naidu
Ministry of Health & Medical Services, Northern Division, Fiji

Introduction: Occupational deprivation is frequent in settings that lack space and resources. In psychiatric wards, this issue is often associated with agitation, frustration and boredom. Common needs identified in these settings are sensory stimulation, fresh air, and scheduling of daily activities. This paper showcases a collaborative approach to developing and trialing an intervention to meet these needs in an adult six-bed psychiatric ward in Fiji.

Objectives: The objective was to lower levels of patient's agitation, frustration, and boredom. The intervention needed to occur in a small space and be self-funded.

Methods: A collaborative approach embedded ownership and sustainability during the development of a self-funded group program. The group program was implemented each morning for adult (18-65 years) inpatients and outpatients of the psychiatric ward. A weekly schedule included education on managing stress, expressive painting, physical movement including walks and indoors games, vocational exploration, and access to reading material.

Results: Twenty-three patients (17 male, six female) attended the five-day/week group program over the course of four months. Each group had an average of five participants. Patients subjectively reported a decrease in boredom and an increase in skill development, and staff commented on a decrease in patient's agitation.

Conclusion: The occupational therapy program designed for psychiatric patients reported initial decrease of occupational deprivation. Collaboration between staff and patients is highly recommended to create sustainability and enable continued improvement of psychiatric patient's occupational engagement.