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Title: Introduction of the Safewards program in Queensland public hospital acute mental health settings

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Aggression during psychiatric hospitalisation is frequent, problematic, and a major challenge for nurses and mental health services more generally. An important protective factor that can limit the likelihood of aggression is the strength of the therapeutic alliance between nursing staff and consumers. The continuing need to focus on good communication and teamwork are also integral to contemporary management of aggressive behaviour (Emmerson *et al.*, 2007). The Safewards program, designed by Professor Len Bowers, Kings College London, offers the opportunity to reduce the frequency of these risks and harmful events resulting with keeping consumers and staff safer (Bowers *et al.*, 2015). This is obtained by reducing the conflict originating factors and finding alternative ways to manage them to prevent flashpoints from arising.

The aim of the research at Metro North Mental Health in Queensland was to introduce the structured Safewards program of 10 mental health nursing interventions in order to understand their impact compared with the traditional approach of nursing assessment and management of aggression. Ethics approval was granted to conduct the current study on general inpatient psychiatric wards of RBWH, TPCH and Ipswich Hospitals. Safewards has not previously been studied in specialised units and we are currently extending this to Secure Mental Health Rehabilitation Units.

The 10 interventions were implemented over a six month period between October 2015 and March 2016. The evaluation has three recognised components, process, impact and outcome. Throughout the project, data has been collected on the number of staff receiving education support, hours of supervision provided at unit level to support the program, number of components of the program successfully implemented, staff feedback on implementation issues and program usefulness. Impact measures completed at six months are currently being compared with baseline and they will be compared again at 12 months to see if there is maintenance of effect. The outcome

evaluation focussed on how the implementation has impacted on conflict and containment indicators. The overall evaluation has been carried out by the RBWH mental health nursing academic office in collaboration with Service Evaluation Unit at The Park and Queensland University of Technology, School of Nursing.

References:

Bowers, L., James, K., Quirk, A., Simpson, A., Stewart, D. and Hodsoll, J., (2015) 'Reducing conflict and containment rates on acute psychiatric wards: The Safewards cluster randomised controlled trial', *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 52 (9), 1412-22. Available online at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0020748915001601>

Emmerson, B., Fawcett, L., Ward, W., Catts, S., Ng, A. and Frost, A., (2007) 'Contemporary management of aggression in an inner city mental health service', *Australasian Psychiatry*, 15 (2), 115-8