

Psychiatry in Hackney

I chose to do my elective in psychiatry as I enjoyed my 4th year psychiatry placement. I primarily wanted to use the placement as an opportunity to build my CV to help me increase my choice of opportunities in the future, particularly when applying for post Foundation Programme posts.

The area in which I was based was Hackney in North East London.

About Hackney

Hackney is a very culturally diverse part of the UK. The largest ethnic groups are White British and Black African/Caribbean. White British people comprise 36% of the population of Hackney which is lower than the rest of London which has a white British population of 45% and the rest of the UK with a White British population of around 80%. People of African or Caribbean descent comprise 23% of the Hackney population compared with 13% of London and 3% of the rest of the UK. Aside from these major groups, there are several other ethnic populations within Hackney which is reflected in the patient group.

Hackney also has some of the highest levels of poverty and deprivation of the UK with some parts being in the top 3% of the country's most deprived areas.

What are the prevalent mental health conditions in Hackney and how does this differ from the rest of the UK?

The focus of my elective was finding out about the outcomes of patients using a relatively new step down service called Enhanced Primary Care (EPC). The most common mental health illnesses amongst this patient group was schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depressive illnesses.

Depression is up to 60% higher in minority ethnic groups than in the white British population. Black Caribbean people are twice as likely to be diagnosed with a psychotic illness as white British people. Other factors which are related to mental health problems are being unemployed, living in poor housing and having a low level of education. Since Hackney is one of the most ethnically diverse and one of the most economically deprived parts of the UK, it is reasonable to assume it has higher than the UK average levels of mental illness.

How is the organisation of community care of patients discharged from hospital different from the rest of the UK?

Mental health services in Hackney are delivered by City and Hackney Primary Care Trust (GPs) and East London Foundation NHS Trust. Across the UK, secondary care mental health services are delivered by trusts which focus specifically on mental health. For people in Hackney, physical health services are delivered by Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and for tertiary services, Barts Health NHS Trust.

Patients discharged from secondary mental healthcare services are usually managed by their GP. This is common practice across the UK. For people with a mental illness there are also many other services available to them when they are no longer in hospital and living in the community. In Hackney, these include:

- **Assertive Outreach Services (AOS)** - community based tertiary service for people with severe mental health problems with whom existing services have difficulty engaging and who present a high risk to themselves or others.
- **2 Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT)** - range of services for people with long-term mental health problems living in the community. The teams work with other agencies such as hospital outpatient departments, social services and probation services. The multidisciplinary teams cover counselling, community psychiatric nursing, mental health education, occupational therapy, psychology, and advice to users, carers, professionals and general public on mental health issues.
- **Community Rehabilitation & Recovery Team** - rehabilitation service for people with severe mental illness with interventions that may include a combination of medication, psychological therapies, the promotion of social networks, vocational, occupational and employment activities.
- **Crisis Service-Psychiatric liaison & Home Treatment Team (HTT)** - for people experiencing mental health problems which require urgent assessment. Clients are initially assessed by a trained nurse and may be seen by a psychiatrist as appropriate.
- **EQUIP Team (Early intervention Services)** - team working with people who because of illness are having a recent experience of psychotic symptoms.
- **Clozapine Clinic (Psychiatric outpatient care)** – for people who have been prescribed Clozapine. A nurse provides mental and physical health assessment, monitoring and support.
- **Therapeutic Community and Outreach** - psychotherapy, psychology and counselling services.

Many of these services are offered by other mental health trusts around the UK although may have different titles. One service which is not so widespread is Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) which has started relatively recently by East London NHS Foundation Trust. Patients' care is managed by their GP with some intervention from a team of EPC staff. This is a new form of service designed to facilitate the step down back into primary care from secondary and its effectiveness was the focus of my elective.

How well do patients with schizophrenia adjust to life in the community following hospital discharge?

As schizophrenia is a long term, chronic illness, many patients take a many months to adjust to life in the community after a hospital admission. Patients may have many factors in their lives which may contribute to their mental illness for example the use of cannabis or other drugs. These are conditions which patients would need support with managing and can take a long time to resolve. Other social factors will also influence a patient's recovery such as relationships at home and housing problems. There is support available within the community but some patients find it difficult to engage with those services and may relapse thus returning back to hospital. Patients with schizophrenia may take many years to completely 'recover' from their symptoms.

How has this placement contributed to future career plans?

I chose to do this placement as, at the moment I have an interest in pursuing psychiatry and I wanted to use the elective period to help achieve something which may help me in my future when applying for training. This placement has made me still want to continue to explore psychiatry as a future career option.