

A Prospective Study Of Patients Absconding From A General Hospital Psychiatry Unit In A Developing Country.

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Abstract:

Characteristics of patients absconding from an open psychiatry ward in a developing country may be different from both those in developed countries and a mental hospital setting. The aim of this paper is to study the incidence and characteristics of patients absconding from an open psychiatric ward in a general hospital-based psychiatric unit in India. We studied patients consecutively admitted to an open psychiatric ward over a 2-month period. We compared those who absconded with those who did not. Out of 231 patients admitted, 33 absconded. Among those who absconded, 15 had bipolar disorder, 11 had schizophrenia and five had substance-related disorders. Nine had indicated their intention to do so at admission. Ten patients had absconded by the second day. The treatment cost was the likely influencing factor for seven patients who absconded after deemed fit for discharge on clinical grounds. Only 10 patients were readmitted to the hospital within 2 weeks of absconding. The risk of absconding is highest in the early days following. Absconding patients did not differ significantly from others in many socio-demographic and clinical features. Treatment costs are an important consideration in India.