

The Pathways To Psychiatric Care: A Cross-cultural Study

Gater, R; de Almeida e Sousa, B; Barrientos, G; Caraveo, J; Chandrashekar, C R; Dhadphale, M; Goldberg, D; al Kathiri, A H; Mubbashar, M; Silhan, K; et al.

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Abstract:

This paper describes the referral pathways taken by 1554 patients newly referred to the mental health services in 11 countries, and documents factors associated with delays in referral. The pathways in centres relatively well provided with psychiatric staff were dominated by general practitioners and to a lesser extent hospital doctors: the relatively less well resourced centres showed a variety of pathways with native healers often playing an important part. Delays were remarkably short in all centres regardless of psychiatric resources, but in some centres we found longer delays on pathways involving native healers. Somatic problems were a common presentation in all centres, and in some centres there was a tendency for patients presenting with somatic problems to have longer delays than those with symptoms of depression or anxiety. The implications of these findings are discussed in the context of an ongoing programme of WHO research activities aimed at improving the quality of mental illness care available in community settings