

Examples

Eleanor
Oliphant is
Completely
Fine by Gail
Honeyman

The Salt Path
by Raynor
Winn

My Name Is
Why, Lemn
Sissay

Can't Hurt me,
David Goggins

Lost
Connections,
Johann Hari

Reasons to stay
alive, Matt Haig

Anxiety is
Really Strange
by Steve Haines

The Sleep
Book: How to
Sleep Well
Every Night by
Guy Meadows

A Mindfulness
Guide For The
Frazzled by
Ruby Wax

Meditations by
Marcus
Aurelius

A Therapeutic Library Service within a Forensic Psychiatric Environment”

A Project with Preliminary Results

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Aim

The aim was “to improve the quality and develop the therapeutic potential of the patient library in a Medium Secure unit (MSU).”



Method

A survey was conducted of patient’s views about the library and the potential for improvement. All staff were surveyed for book recommendations. A list was compiled for which charity funding was applied. A bookcase was ordered to be placed in a communal space in the hospital, and the books will be placed there for patients to access. A trust based book register was placed with the books and a patient representative asked to help curate the collection. MDTs were encouraged to help distribute the books.

Background

Forensic patients often spend long periods of time in hospital, and during the COVID-19 pandemic especially there was a hunger for as much activity as allowable within those constraints. There is a library at Ravenswood Medium Secure Unit, with a small number of books donated from patients and staff over the years. The impression was that it was underused, could be better curated, and even provide a therapeutic offering to patients when appropriate. By increasing footfall and offering specific books tailored to patients by the MDT, the hope is to offer both a foundation for human connection within an institutional setting as well as moments of solace for patients.

Survey Results:

After a whole hospital survey 40% of respondents reported using the current library less than monthly. 90% said they enjoyed reading, and 80% that an improved library service could improve their wellbeing.

Discussion and Future Plan: The survey has demonstrated a desire amongst some patients to read more, and preliminary feedback has been positive, demonstrating at least some positive impact on patients’ view on mental illness. The feedback was not all positive, and we have become aware of the risk for example of making people feel more anxious about their condition by reading a book on anxiety. Careful collaboration with the MDT will help ameliorate this. The library service will continue in the months to come and hopefully a repeat survey will show increased use and appreciation of the service.

Quoted feedback from patients:

“The books should be tailored to each patient”

“There’s an appetite for reading in the hospital, people order books”

“I think other patients will benefit from reading this”

“Short but informative book, easy to read.”

“So surprising that a confident celebrity like Ruby Wax would get mental illness”

“I identified with the book, it was comforting to know that I wasn’t the only one feeling this way”

“It made me feel more anxious when I read about anxiety”

“It has changed the way I think about my depression”

“I think I might talk to someone about the anxiety now”