

Physical Health Matters : Exploring the Impact of Physical Health Education in Weight Management in a Forensic Inpatient Population

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Introduction

Research suggests that in England 64.8% of adults are currently classified as overweight or obese and this is more so in adults with severe mental health illness (Lin and Sud, 2022) especially in inpatient facilities which could be due to a multitude of factors. It was also noted that providing practical advice through fun activities to support change were successful in driving lifestyle changes aiding in weight loss and managing preventable illnesses (Pedersen et al., 2020).

Methods

The Physical Health Matters group was started on the ward running once a week for 6 weeks, where common physical health topics were tackled. Physical health measurements were taken before starting the group including; height, weight and waist circumference which were then used to calculate BMI and waist to height ratio (if BMI <35) which can give an indication into the level of increased health risk. These measurements were also repeated three months after the group ended.

Results

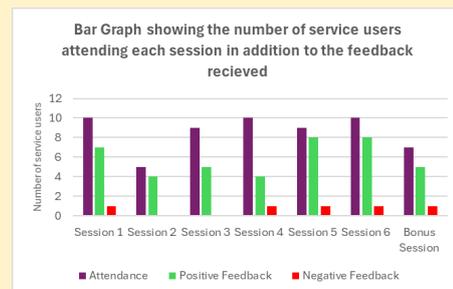
From the pre-intervention baseline measurements, it was noted that 13 out of 15 service users had a BMI above 25, falling into the overweight and obese categories. Nearly all service users had a waist-height ratio greater than the healthy limit. Measurements taken three months after completion of the group showed that 10 out of 13 had reduced their weight and BMI, however, their waist-height circumferences remained above the healthy limit suggested by NICE, which could possibly be because BMI does not take into account central obesity.

Discussion

The aims of this intervention were to help promote healthy lifestyle choices and encourage discussions around important health topics through running interactive and engaging sessions. This was in anticipation that they will make service users more conscious about their health and encourage weight management.

During each session a register of the attendees was compiled and feedback gained in the form of green and red smiley faces representing positive/negative feedback which the service users voted with anonymously. The be-

low graph shows consistent attendance to the sessions with mostly positive feedback received.



Analysis of data gathered from questionnaires completed at the end of the sessions showed that service users felt more confident in the level of their physical health and the services available to help them to manage their physical health on the ward. They also said they are more likely to engage with the physical health clinic on the ward and also most likely in the community following discharge which is very positive showing long-lasting effects of developing and delivering health and social care initiatives in the local population and engaging service users as stakeholders. They also said that they learnt more about common physical health conditions that may affect them and they also learnt from each other from being given the opportunity to discuss and share their knowledge and experiences with each other.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that sharing knowledge about physical health risks and engaging service users in these discussions can empower them to make healthier lifestyle choices and reduce their risk of developing preventable diseases. It might be beneficial to replicate this in other forensic populations but also to compare the data to non-forensic populations to gain further ideas of improvement in weight management interventions for forensic inpatient populations.

References:

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- Pedersen, A. L. W., Lindekilde, C. R., Andersen, K., Hjorth, P., Gildberg, F. A. (2020). Health behaviours of forensic mental health service users, in relation to smoking, alcohol consumption, dietary behaviours and physical activity—A mixed methods systematic review. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*. 28 (3): 444-461.