



PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed until 8 October 2015

Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland welcomes the letter from James Warner, Chair of the Old Age Psychiatry Faculty (UK) to all providers in England and Wales to maintain existing specialist old age services.

A study to compare old age psychiatry and general adult psychiatry services has found that older people have more unmet need if cared for in services for working age adults compared to those in specialist old age services.¹

The evidence published in the October issue of the British Journal of Psychiatry adds to the evidence that older people with mental health disorders are disadvantaged if they are cared for in ageless services². The development of ageless services in the UK has attracted international comment.³

Dr Seamus McNulty, Chair of the Old Age Psychiatry Faculty of the RCPsych in Scotland said, "The expertise of older people's mental health services lies in the care and treatment of people with complex mixtures of psychological, cognitive, functional, behavioural, physical and social problems usually related to ageing.

"It is now clear that older people should have their care and treatment managed by professionals who have specific expertise in that area. This particularly applies to core services, such as community mental health teams and inpatient facilities. We recognise some services, such as crisis teams may need to operate across all ages, but in this case, the teams should have staff adequately trained and experienced in diagnosing and managing older people", he said.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists, supported by key national stakeholders, have developed needs-led service criteria which focus on the needs of older people who often have multiple long-term conditions complicating their diagnosis and care.

The criteria are:

- 1. People of any age with a primary dementia.*

1. Abdul-Hamid et al BJPsych (TBC)

2. Warner J *International Psychogeriatrics* **26**: 1055-1058. 2014

3. The Times 24th Jan 2014

2. *People with mental disorder and physical illness or frailty which contributes to, or complicates the management of their mental illness. Exceptionally this may include people under 65.*

3. *People with psychological or social difficulties related to the ageing process, or end of life issues, or who feel their needs may be best met by a service for older people. This would normally include people over the age of 70.*

The criteria are designed to be flexible and enshrine patient choice. These criteria are now being used successfully around the country. They reduce concerns about age discrimination while ensuring older people are treated by teams skilled in managing their needs.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Attachment:

Paper on 'Comparison of how old age psychiatry and general adult psychiatry services meet the needs of elderly people with functional mental illness: cross-sectional study' - *Abdul-Hamid et al*

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For media enquiries or for interview requests, please contact Laura Hudson on telephone 0131 344 4966 or email lHUDSON@rcpsych.ac.uk,

1. Abdul-Hamid et al BJPsych (TBC)
2. Warner J *International Psychogeriatrics* **26**: 1055-1058. 2014
3. The Times 24th Jan 2014