GENERAL HOSPITAL PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC VERSUS MENTAL HOSPITAL
SETTING: A STUDY OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES IN A NOVEL
EXPERIENCE

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SUMMARY

A retrospective analysis of data showed that patients in general stayed for shorter duration in general hospital psychiatric clinic than in mental hospital.

Most of the mental hospitals few years ago provided a sort of custodial care to mental patients. With the use of various somatic and chemotherapies an era of revolution in the concept of care for mental patients emerged. These modalities of treatment shortened the stay of patients in the hospitals and assisted in their rehabilitation.

Straker et al. (1971) reported early return of mental patients to the community. They observed that both the acute and chronic patients could be discharged from psychiatric inpatient units in general hospital within 30 days.

A number of studies on the patients utilizing general hospital psychiatric units have appeared in the contemporary literature (Khanna et al., 1974; Sethi and Gupta, 1972), but there are very few studies comparing the patient population attending a mental hospital and a general hospital psychiatric clinic. Sharma & Hussain (1977) have pointed out that ideally a study should be done in the same community, during the same time period and should have a similar psychiatric orientation under similar administration.

The Psychiatry Department attached to Dr. S. N. Medical College, Jodhpur, presented a unique opportunity for such a study. An eighty five beded mental hospital was attached to Dr. S. N. Medical College for inpatient services. The inpatient department was shifted to newly constructed Medical College Hospital along with outdoor on 29-7-1981. This presented us with same hospital, same staff, and patients, belonging to same geographical area and of same socio-economic background, but in two different settings, i.e., mental hospital setting and general hospital setting. The aim of the present study was to evaluate the duration of stay of the patients admitted to psychiatry ward from August 1980 to December, 1980 and to compare it with the patients admitted to mental hospital during the corresponding period a year back.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A retrospective analysis of case records of the patients admitted to psychiatry ward, Medical College Hospital during August, 1980 to December, 1980, and patients admitted to erstwhile mental hospital, Jodhpur during August 1979 to December 1979 was done. The diagnostic criteria followed were the same as the same staff was there in both the settings. The data obtained were subjected to relevant statistical analysis.

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OBSERVATIONS AND RESULT

The total number of admissions during the period of study, i.e., from August to December in year 1979 was 200 and that during the same period in 1980 was 284; this means that after the change of hospital there was a 42% increase in the rate of admission. Records of 57 cases in 1979 and 8 cases in 1980 were found to be missing. Hence, while analysing the data only available records were used.

Table I shows duration of stay in relation to age, sex and domicile. When duration of stay for all categories of patients was computed, mean duration of stay in the mental hospital during 1979 was 32.24 days and that in the general hospital psychiatry ward (after shifting) was 13.75 days. No particular trend was observed when the duration of stay was assessed in terms of age.

| Variable          | Mental Hospital (1979) | Psychiatric ward of General Hospital (1980) |
|-------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
|                   | N  | Mean     | N  | Mean     |
| Age (in years)    |    |          |    |          |
| up to 20          | 14 | 21.14    | 42 | 14.83    |
| 21 to 30          | 51 | 37.58    | 76 | 12.69    |
| 31 to 40          | 42 | 33.66    | 70 | 12.18    |
| 41 to 50          | 21 | 27.90    | 54 | 13.12    |
| above 50          | 15 | 23.13    | 34 | 18.94    |
| Sex               |    |          |    |          |
| Male              | 109| 29.68    | 188| 13.67    |
| Female            | 34 | 40.44    | 88 | 13.89    |
| Domicile          |    |          |    |          |
| Rural             | 81 | 26.75    | 163| 13.67    |
| Urban             | 62 | 39.41    | 113| 13.84    |

In psychiatry ward the duration of stay of patients did not differ with regards to sex. The males stayed for 13.67 mean days, where as females stayed for 13.89 days. On the contrary the mean duration of stay of males in mental hospital was shorter (29.68 days) and that for females was longer (40.44 days).

The domicile of the patients did not differentiate the patient population as regards to the stay in the psychiatry ward (13.67 days for rural and 13.84 days for urban). Where as in the mental hospital the urban patients stayed much longer (39.43 days) as compared to rural persons (26.75 days).

Table—2 shows the disease wise distribution of the duration of stay of the patients in the two settings. The mean duration of stay of patients of Epilepsy was longer (18 days) in general hospital. The patients of Neurosis stayed longer (16.83 days) in comparison to those of Schizophrenic and Affective disorders (13.27 & 14.01 days respectively). All categories of patients stayed for much longer duration in mental hospital. The stay of Schizophrenics (33.82 days), Epileptics (38.75 days) and those of Symptomatic psychoses (41.5) was longer than Affective disorder.

| Disease            | Mental Hospital % | Psychiatric ward of General Hospital % |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Schizophrenia      | 120 33.82 83.91 | 100 13.67 65.21                        |
| Affective Disorder | 12 17.00 8.32   | 60 14.01 21.73                         |
| Epilepsy           | 4 38.75 2.79    | 13 18.00 4.71                          |
| Symptomatic Psychosis | 2 41.5 1.33 | 6 10.00 2.17                           |
| Drug Addiction     | 1 11.00 .69    | 6 11.33 2.17                           |
| Neurosis           | 1 43.00 .69    | 12 16.83 4.34                          |
| Mental Retardation | 3 18.66 2.09   |                                        |

In psychiatry ward the duration of stay of patients did not differ with regards to sex. The males stayed for 13.67 mean days, where as females stayed for 13.89 days. On the contrary the mean duration of stay of males in mental hospital was shorter (29.68 days) and that for females was longer (40.44 days).

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The only patient of Neurosis stayed for 43 days (A case of O.C.N. admitted for Behaviour Therapy).

Another trend in mental hospital setting was that majority of patients were Schizophrenics and very small number of other categories of cases were there. In general hospital setting, number of other category of patients also increased proportionately.

DISCUSSION

The two periods chosen for the study were similar excepting the year; another difference was that in the period during year 1980 the mental hospital had shifted to the psychiatry ward. The effective bed strength remained the same; as the number of chronic patient, who could not be discharged, was same in two settings. The first finding was that there was an increase in the number of admission by 42% in the psychiatry ward. This increase could be attributed to the fact that there was a simultaneous increase in the number of the patients attending the O.P.D, increased acceptability on account of shifting in the general hospital and a comparatively uncomplicated process of admission.

The duration of stay in our study was shorter for the patients admitted to psychiatric ward than that for mental hospital. The finding is in accordance with those of Sharma & Hussain (1977), but in our study no relation of age and duration of stay could be found, except in general hospital psychiatry ward where the patients above 50 years stayed for longer duration. Sharma & Hussain (1977) had reported that the advancing age was associated with a longer hospital stay.

Sex wise there was no difference in the duration of stay in general hospital setting, where as, females stayed much longer (40.44 days) in comparison to males (29.68 days) in the mental hospital. Sharma & Hussain (1977) had reported no difference in stay in general hospital but in their report the females stayed for shorter duration in mental hospital; and they attributed this to stronger family ties. The shorter duration of stay of male patients in our study could be explained in terms of economical factors. The male being an earning member is got discharged earlier.

In psychiatry ward setting relatives were allowed to stay with the patients and also the visits of other relatives were more frequent. Not many restrictions were applied. This was perhaps most important factor in quicker discharge of patients from general hospital.

Diagnosis wise Schizophrenics constituted major group in both the settings; 83.82% in mental hospital and 65.21% in general hospital setting. Sharma & Hussain (1977) had also reported similar findings.

The early discharge from psychiatry wards indicated the early entry back of the patients in the society. In reasonable limits we can assume that early discharge restored the patients to their occupation earlier meaning thereby reduced loss in terms of economic factors and man hours.

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