

Action in paediatric mental health

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An increase in admissions of children with mental health problems prompted nurses in a general paediatric unit at Rockhampton Hospital in Queensland to launch an action research project. The project has enhanced an overall sense of improved knowledge, skills and confidence among the nursing staff in the paediatric unit for the benefit of children experiencing mental health problems.

The nurses noted an increase in the admissions of children with mental health problems and felt they lacked the skills and knowledge to provide sufficient care to the children. A series of focus groups were conducted to articulate the problem and identify potential solutions.

A significant outcome of this project has been an increased awareness within the Central Queensland Health Service District of

the issues faced by general nurses in providing care to children and adolescents with mental health problems within a rural paediatric unit. While many research projects end at this point, this one has resulted in changes in practice including:

- Strengthening relationships between the paediatric unit and child and youth mental health services.
- A review of the current procedures and policies for admission and care of patients with a mental health issue in the paediatric unit was undertaken, with six revised policies being introduced.
- A management plan for paediatric patients with a mental health issue was implemented to facilitate staff in identifying risk factors and specific resource requirements.
- A series of education sessions and workshops were held on various aspects of paediatric mental disorders and mental health care.
- A series of "In 'Ya Face Education" posters were produced covering a range of topics concerning paediatric mental disorders and mental health care. These were strategically located on the toilet doors for maximum effect.
- A mental health learning package for general nurses in the paediatric unit was developed for inclusion in the existing orientation package.

Perth hosts Australia's largest mental health conference

This year the 19th Annual TheMHS Conference will be open to nurses on a live blog at <http://themhs.wordpress.com/>

The 2009 congress theme is, **You, Your Family, Your Community, Your Mental Health – the path ahead.**

The event links concepts of the interrelatedness of individuals, families and communities, providing connections which can strengthen and support mental health and emotional wellbeing. The conference features voices of respected international, national and local leaders in their field. The event is unique because it brings together consumers, policy makers, practitioners, carers and researchers at one event.

You can view The MHS website to get more background and detail on the event <http://www.themhs.org>

If you have missed out on this conference our Summer Forum is held every February in Sydney. You can find out more here <http://www.themhs.org/summer-forum>

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