

Exploring the Meaning of Safety in Acute Mental Health Inpatient Units from the Consumer Perspective

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Abstract : Safety is a priority in mental health services, and no more so than in the acute inpatient setting. Mental health service policies and accreditation frameworks commonly approach safety from a risk reduction or elimination perspective leading to service approaches that are arguably more focused on risk than on safety. An exploration what safety means for people who have experienced admission to an acute mental health inpatient unit is currently under way in Sydney, Australia. Using a phenomenographic research approach, this study is seeking to understand the meaning of safety from the perspective of people who use, rather than those who deliver mental health services. Preliminary findings suggest that the meanings of safety for users of mental health services vary from the meanings inherent in the policies and frameworks that inform how mental health services and mental health practice are delivered. This variance has implications for the physical and environmental design of acute mental health inpatient facilities, the policies and practices, and the education and training of mental health staff in particular nurses, who comprise the majority of the mental health workforce. These variances will be presented, along with their implications for the way quality and safety in mental health services are evaluated.

Keywords : acute inpatient, mental health, nursing, phenomenography, recovery, safety

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