Medical Xpress

Does the ambulance service need more training in mental health issues?

August 1 2013

Ruth Elliot, Senior Lecturer in the department of Mental Health and Learning Disability at the University of Huddersfield, has published an article discussing the need for a national 'Mental Health Pathway' to enable paramedics to provide the appropriate care for people who present mental health issues. Credit: The University of Huddersfield

Ruth Elliot, Senior Lecturer in the department of Mental Health and Learning Disability at the University of Huddersfield, has published an article discussing the need for a national 'Mental Health Pathway' to enable paramedics to provide the appropriate care for people who

present mental health issues.

The Department of Health (DH) (2005a) acknowledges the huge modernisation of the ambulance service in England and faster access to people with immediate life threatening conditions, however the service is also responding to an increasing number of patients who have an urgent primary care need, which includes mental distress, as opposed to clinical emergency.

The DH (2006) policy calls for a "New Vision" where the ambulance service could increase efficiency and effectiveness towards patients who are experiencing non life threatening emergencies. The key aims are to form a programme of advancement to address both improving mental health and accessibility of services for people with poor mental health. The vision of the policy is that by 2020 mental and physical health will have equal priority. The development of a mental health pathway within the ambulance service may help to reduce admissions or re-attendance whilst improving care for patients. An evidence-based approach is used to provide a balanced, logical and supported argument within a reflection of practice (Borton, 1970,). This is evaluated against a hypothetical patient's case study which reflects common issues faced by paramedics and ambulance technicians. The analytical process considers patient, professional, organisational and multi-disciplinary team perspectives.

Provided by University of Huddersfield

Citation: Does the ambulance service need more training in mental health issues? (2013, August 1) retrieved 25 April 2024 from
https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-08-ambulance-mental-health-issues.html

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