

Ethnic inequalities in mental health care prompt call for review

July 15 2013

Individual ethnic groups use psychiatric and mental health services in Scotland very differently, a study suggests.

Researchers have found that there is a significant difference in the rates of hospitalisations for [mental health problems](#) according to ethnic group.

The study also revealed that there are widely differing patterns of hospitalisation for mental health problems among non-White groups. It is the first study of its kind to be carried out in Scotland.

Researchers say that psychiatric and [mental health services](#) should be reviewed and monitored to ensure all groups have access to the best [preventative care](#) and treatment at an early stage.

The authors also say that the findings show that people from some minority ethnic groups may not be using mental health services until they are seriously ill. They found major differences between ethnic groups in the numbers admitted to hospital for serious mental illness.

People from most, but not all, [minority groups](#) who needed to go to hospital were significantly more likely to be treated under the mental health act, the researchers also found.

The Edinburgh team say that the findings could be explained by difficulties in diagnosing and treating mental illness among minority groups at an early stage within mental health services.

Researchers also say that the findings could be explained by a lack of awareness among minority groups of the support services available. They add that people from minority ethnic groups may be reluctant to seek medical help in part because of [social stigma](#).

Dr Narinder Bansal, of the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Population Health Sciences, said: "Studying ethnic variations in psychiatric [hospital admission](#) enables us to identify and monitor inequalities in [mental health care](#).

"We hope that this study will inform politicians and doctors' decisions about how treatment is best delivered and planned for, to ensure equal access to early care. It is vital that mental health services meet the needs of Scotland's culturally diverse population."

Researchers studied all first-time psychiatric hospital admissions for any psychiatric diagnosis between 2001 and 2008. These include all psychiatric disorders, mood disorders such as depression, and psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia.

More information: The study is published in the journal *Ethnicity and Health*.

Provided by University of Edinburgh

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