

Change is needed to prevent homicides by individuals with mental illness

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Following the stabbing death of Dr. Jeroen Ensink, a new father in London who was killed by a mentally ill man who had walked free after attacking a police officer with a knife days earlier, experts are calling for change. They note that the dangerousness of a small but volatile subset of psychiatric patients is not taken seriously enough.

In a recent *Journal of Advanced Nursing* editorial, Dr. Niall McCrae of King's College London and Julian Hendy of hundredfamilies.org state that much-needed reform of [mental health services](#) is being obstructed by efforts to avoid stigma, which can leave patients without accurate diagnoses or proper care. Some scholars and activists also disapprove of any control of patients that they perceive as oppression or abuse, rather than valuing such action as a sometimes necessary element of care.

The authors lament that only the most disturbed cases are admitted to psychiatric wards, and patients are sometimes discharged before they are well enough. In addition, treatment is often simply tranquillising medication, with insufficient time or resources for meaningful therapeutic engagement.

"The system is now becoming unsustainable, and we are reaching peak community care," said Dr. McCrae.

More information: Niall McCrae. The rising toll of homicide by psychiatric patients: have we reached 'peak community care'?, *Journal of Advanced Nursing* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/jan.13187](https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13187)

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