

Poster

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Poster 30

[P-30-01] Mental Health Literacy, Stigma, Empathy, and Confidence in Managing Psychiatric Patients: Perspectives of Doctors and Nurses in a Singapore Emergency Department

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Background

With the global rise in mental health disorders, Singapore has seen an increase in prevalence from 13.4% in 2020 to 17% in 2022. Despite strategic efforts to expand psychiatric services and integrate mental health care into primary settings, Emergency Departments (EDs) continue to experience growing patient volumes, which contribute to increased workloads, stress, and burnout among healthcare professionals. This study examines mental health literacy, stigma, empathy, and confidence in managing psychiatric patients among doctors and nurses in a Singaporean ED.

Methodology

110 ED professionals (47 doctors and 63 nurses) from a restructured general hospital completed an anonymous survey in late 2021. The survey included validated tools such as the Mental Health Literacy Scale (MHLS), the Opening Minds Scale for Health Care Providers-15 (OMS-HC-15), and the Jefferson Scale of Empathy (JSE), along with original questionnaires that assessed confidence in managing psychiatric patients and familiarity with the local Mental Health Care and Treatment Act (MHCTA).

Results

Doctors had higher scores in mental health literacy (MHLS: 121.89 vs. 118.27) and empathy (JSE: 109.32 vs. 101.44) while exhibiting lower stigma (OMS-HC-15: 41.98 vs. 43.57) compared to nurses. When compared to their Western counterparts, Singaporean ED professionals showed lower levels of mental health literacy, empathy, and stigma, but they performed better than those in East Asia. Both groups expressed moderate confidence in managing psychiatric patients and emphasised the need for additional training.

Conclusion

These findings underscore the importance of targeted educational initiatives and systemic policies aimed at enhancing mental health literacy, reducing stigma, and fostering empathy and confidence among ED professionals, ultimately improving psychiatric care in Singapore's emergency settings.