

An exploration of patient experiences accessing an Emergency Department for a mental health crisis. An untold story.

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Emergency Departments of general hospitals are often used by people for assistance when experiencing a mental health crisis. There are a number of studies regarding mental health care in general hospital emergency departments. These studies are limited to patient satisfaction with specific Emergency Department psychiatric-liaison services or only reporting on the effectiveness of such a service. The studies are not designed to address the subjective experience: What does it feel like to come to a busy emergency department, with little space for privacy, to get help for a problem that still bears significant stigma?

A qualitative study design based in phenomenology intended to explore and understand those who have lived the experience of going to an Emergency Department for a mental health crisis.

A research protocol was developed to conduct unstructured in-depth interviews. Potential participants were invited to join the study through advertisement in local newspapers. Two in-depth interviews were conducted.

Due to the low number of participants, data saturation could not be achieved and data analysis was incomplete. It was determined that publishing the very small amount of existing data would reduce anonymity of participants. The study was terminated at this stage as it was unable to be completed as intended.

This report contains an overview of the intended study and includes the challenges and experiences of the researcher as a novice. It is anticipated that the experience of the researcher on this project highlights learning opportunities for both the researcher and others in future research.

For the full report on this project please go to the HETI website and follow the links to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program completed reports

Kim is a Clinical Nurse Consultant working in mental health services and currently based at the Mid North Coast LHD at Coffs Harbour. At the time of the project, Kim had a long career in mental health with Southern NSW LHD. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Health Science (Nursing) and Master of Nursing (Mental Health – Nurse Practitioner) award. Kim is passionate about engaging supporting general hospital staff in learning and developing skills to assist people who may be experiencing mental health problems, and this project provided the opportunity to convey to others what it's really like to come to an ED in crisis.

