

Department of Behavioural Medicine

The Department of Behavioural Medicine was started in the Singapore General Hospital (SGH) in April 2003 with the aim of providing a comprehensive integrated multi-disciplinary service in the management of patients with psychological and psychiatric disorders.

CLINICAL SERVICES

Inpatient

The department provides inpatient treatment for patients with psychiatric disorders. Group therapy is organised for patients admitted for the treatment of eating disorders during their stay in hospital. Guidelines for suicide prevention and post-suicide event management in SGH have been written with contributions from members of various departments.

Approval has been granted by the Medical Board to set up an Eating Disorders & Weight Management Programme for the multi-disciplinary management of patients with conditions such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder.

At the height of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) crisis in Singapore, the department provided support in the form of counselling and debriefing for SGH staff. The department also provided counselling for SGH staff with psychological problems.

Outpatient

Outpatient clinics have seen an increase of referrals from SGH doctors, polyclinics, general practitioner (GP) clinics, and self-referrals (Fig. 1).

Consultation Liaison Service

There has been an increase in number of blue letter referrals (Fig. 2).

RESEARCH

The department is conducting research on various disorders such as:

Eating Disorders

1. Anorexia nervosa — seasons of birth study
2. Eating disorders in Singapore: a prevalence study
3. A cross-cultural analysis of eating disorders

Anxiety and Depression

1. Prevalence of anxiety and depression among cancer patients
2. Cognitive behavioural therapy of depressed post-myocardial infarction patients: effects on cardiovascular and haematological measurements
3. Anxiety disorders in Singapore: a community survey

Alcoholism

1. Biological markers of alcoholism: a comparative study of the alcohol dehydrogenase and aldehyde dehydrogenase systems in Indian and Chinese alcohol dependent patients

Culture Bound Syndromes

1. Psychosocial stressors that precipitate dissociative trance disorder in Singapore
2. Dissociative trance disorder in Singapore: outcomes at 5 years

Neuropsychiatry

1. MRI volumetry study in patients with temporal lobe epilepsy
2. Schizophreniform psychosis in a patient with central and extrapontine myelinolysis

SARS

1. Understanding resilience in the face of crisis: the aftermath of SARS

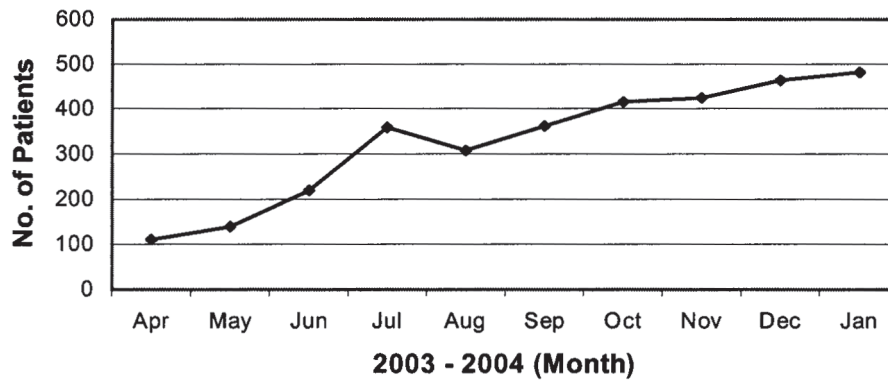


Fig. 1. Specialist outpatient clinic attendance during the period April 2003 to January 2004.

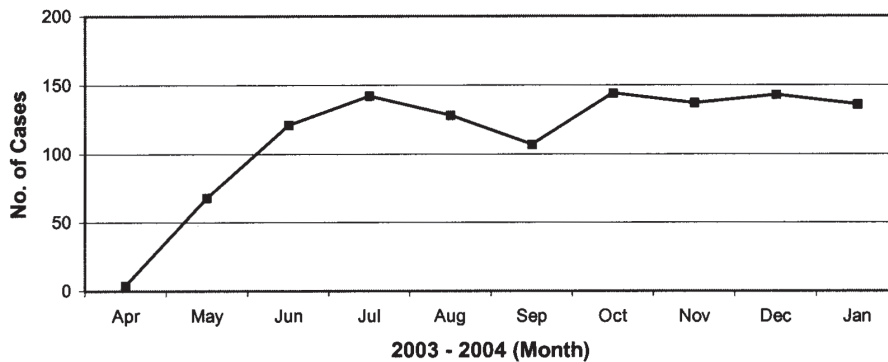


Fig. 2. Blue letter referrals during the period April 2003 to January 2004.

EDUCATION

A Depression Education Programme for GPs was held on 3 August 2003 at Sheraton Towers Hotel. An Interagency Seminar for psychologists on “Pain Management & Hypnotherapy” was held on 3 October 2003. A series of lectures on Suicide Precaution Guidelines was given to clinical staff from the Divisions of Medicine and Surgery.

The department was contracted by the Health Promotion Board to run a series of 50 talks on stress management and depression for various organisations. Various lectures on suicide and personality disorders were given to the nurses.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT/RECOGNITION

The department has been accorded accreditation for Basic Specialist Training and Advanced Specialist Training in psychiatry in SGH from the Academy of Medicine, Singapore and the Division of Graduate Medical Studies, National University of Singapore.

PUBLICATIONS

1. Ng BY. Strategies for helping depressed men with sexual dysfunction. *Singapore Fam Physician* 2003; 29:91-2.
2. Rajeswari K, Lim LEC. Community psychosocial rehabilitation and its challenges: Singapore Association for Mental Health’s perspective. *ASEAN J Psychiatry* 2003; 6:96-9.