

Publication

A qualitative study to investigate Swiss hospital personnel's perceived importance of and experiences with patient's mental-somatic multimorbidities

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BACKGROUND: Mental-somatic multimorbidity in general hospital settings is associated with long hospital stays, frequent rehospitalization, and a deterioration of disease course, thus, highlighting the need for treating hospital patients more holistically. However, there are several challenges to overcome to address mental health conditions in these settings. This study investigated hospital personnel's perceived importance of and experiences with mental-somatic multimorbidities of patients in hospital settings in Basel, Switzerland, with special consideration of the differences between physicians and nurses. **METHODS:** Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with nurses (n = 10) and physicians (n = 8) in different hospitals located in Basel, Switzerland. An inductive approach of the framework analysis was used to develop the themes. **RESULTS:** Four themes emerged from the data analysis: 1) the relevance of mental-somatic multimorbidity within general hospitals, 2) health professionals managing their emotions towards mental health, 3) knowledge and competencies in treating patients with mental-somatic multimorbidity, and 4) interprofessional collaboration for handling mental-somatic multimorbidity in hospital settings. The mental-somatic multimorbidities in general hospital patients was found to be relevant among all hospital professionals, although the priority of mental health was higher for nurses than for physicians. This might have resulted from different working environments or in efficient interprofessional collaboration in general hospitals. Physicians and nurses both highlighted the difficulties of dealing with stigma, a lack of knowledge of mental disorders, the emphasis place on treating somatic disorders, and competing priorities and work availability, which all hindered the adequate handling of mental-somatic multimorbidity in general hospitals. **CONCLUSION:** To support health professionals to integrate mental health into their work, proper environments within general hospitals are needed, such as private rooms in which to communicate with patients. In addition, changes in curriculums and continuing training are needed to improve the understanding of mental-somatic multimorbidities and reduce negative stereotypes. Similarly, interprofessional collaboration between health professionals needs to be strengthened to adequately identify and treat mentally multimorbid patients. A stronger focus should be placed on physicians to improve their competencies in considering patient mental health in their daily somatic treatment care.

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