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The appropriateness of certification of patients to Sterkfontein hospital .

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CHAPTER THREE

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 THE SETTING

Sterkfontein Psychiatric Hospital is located in Mogale City, formerly known as Krugersdorp. It has 820 approved beds, of which 727 are available beds. Of these only 590 are usable (34). The hospital has two sections: one for forensic patients and the other for general psychiatry patients. Both sections contain female and male wards, which cater for adult psychiatric patients. It is a tertiary hospital attached to the Psychiatry Department of the University of the Witwatersrand located in Johannesburg. The data used for this research refer to patients admitted to this hospital during January of 2003.

3.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of the study were to:

- determine the percentage (or number) of patients who could be regarded as having been inappropriately certified for admission to this hospital according to the definition below;
- describe clinical and demographic characteristics of this group of inappropriately certified patients;
- identify the main areas that are the source of the inappropriate certifications;
- assess the cost impact of this group of patients on hospital resources;

- compare the standards of certification used.

3.3 THE HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis was that an insignificantly small number of patients certified for admission to Sterkfontein Hospital under Sections 9 and 12 of the Mental Health Act, No. 18 of 1973 might be considered to be inappropriately certified. Appropriate certification was defined as certification that fulfilled the provisions of Sections 9 or 12 of the Mental Health Act No. 18 of 1973 and had positive clinical findings in accordance with the medical certificate completed on admission (G2/28 +ve) to the hospital. Inappropriate certification was defined as meaning that the certified person had negative clinical findings with regard to the medical certificate completed on admission (G2/28 –ve) to the hospital.

3.4 PROCEDURES

The list of patients admitted to Sterkfontein Hospital in January 2003 was retrieved from the admissions records. This list was used to retrieve administrative and clinical files from the registry, where they were stored. Each administrative file contained legal documents which included a completed application form for certification; the medical certificate(s) of the referring clinician, completed under relevant section of the Act; the medical certificate issued on admission (G2/28); the reception order, where appropriate; other supporting documents and, in certain instances, an affidavit signed by relative(s) or the person applying for certification.

The clinical files, in addition to these, contained clinical information that included reasons for referral; complaints and their history; relevant medical, surgical, psychiatric, family, social, personal, forensic and developmental histories.

The administrative and clinical files were used in collecting relevant demographic and clinical data, which were documented in the data capture sheets (see Appendix).

The “sent back book”, which contained a list of the patients who had not been admitted but had been sent back to the specific referring facilities, was used in identifying this category of patients referred for admission during January 2003. Reasons for not admitting these patients had been recorded in this book.