

SELF HARM IN HOSPITAL

Introduction.

Many people who are admitted to psychiatric hospital can have strong desires to harm themselves. Usually this can be dealt with through the assistance of hospital staff however it can become an issue whose management causes us some confusion:

The issue

- If a person is detained then they are stopped for self harming
- If a person is not detained then they can sometimes be discharged from hospitals because they self harm.

What is the effect?

We believe the effect of this is

- Self harm continues but becomes secretive
- People stop having treatment when they need it
- People are at higher risk of more damaging self harm.

The logic

“Having tried to stop me from self harming in hospital I was told that at home I would be entitled to self harm and this couldn’t be prevented”

It doesn’t seem logical to see self harm as permissible when being treated in the community but not in hospital.

Is self harming ever ok?

- It acts as a coping mechanism for people and can act as a source of relief whether people are in hospital or not.
- However if people are permitted to self harm this could result in a high degree of injury and risk both in hospital and at home

We agree that the hospital should try to prevent self harm.

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However if people do self harm in hospital then:

- People should be supported to deal with their self harm
- People should be supported and cared for and talked through the reasons why they have done such things
- They should be offered alternative methods for coping if they are successful in self harm.
- Peoples injuries should be dealt with

ATTITUDES

Sometimes we believe that we are subject to negative attitudes if we self harm:

- It should not be assumed that people are being manipulative spiteful or attention seeking if they self harm
- People should not judge people for their self harm

Whatever the reason for self harm people still need help.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

We need to recognise that people who self harm also carry personal responsibility (to an extent) to deal with their self harm.

The idea that impaired judgement implies lack of personal responsibility and not having impaired judgement implies personal responsibility is too blunt and crude a mechanism for assessing personal responsibility and a professional response.

Everyone is a product of their influences and therefore it can be hard to assign complete personal responsibility to self harm even though a person is aware of what they are doing and the consequences of it.

Even if we can be held personally responsible for the fact that we self harm this doesn't mean that we should be denied compassion and support.



ACTION FOR MENTAL HEALTH



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE