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Brief Interventions in Mental Health Assessment Services: Single Session Work (SSW): A feasibility study

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BACKGROUND: People with psychosocial distress have been increasingly evident as overrepresented and as an under-resourced gap in presentations to the assessment service of Metro South Addiction and Mental Health Service (MSAMHS). This group risks mental health decline and further service need.

AIMS: The primary aim of this pilot study was to investigate the feasibility of the Single Session Work (SSW) model as a responsive health care solution for people presenting to MSAMHS with psychosocial distress under exclusive Triage criteria.

METHOD: The Bouverie Centre SSW Implementation Resource Parcel was utilized. A pre-post questionnaire design was implemented and then compared with a retrospective non-comparative baseline group. The study focused on the influences of the intervention on the consumer and staff perceptions and compared service provision time between treatment as per usual and the SSW participant group.

RESULTS: Consumer participant's perceptions improved across key domains: worry, problem frequency, life interference, and confidence. All participants indicated plans to engage external supports. Staff found the model was easy to use and helped them to assist consumers to build resilience and enact solutions. There was a marginal difference of service provision time required for treatment as usual and the participant groups.

CONCLUSION: Findings of this pilot study are arguably representative of previous research that supports SSW as producing valid, effective, cost-efficient, and sustained outcomes. SSW engaged consumer confidence in finding solutions and accessing external supports. Provision of service time to deliver SSW was of marginal difference to treatment as usual, though service trajectory is quite different. Further investigations would be recommended to confirm the efficiencies of the model as a preventative service provision in the assessment service arena.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH NURSING: Single Session Work is aligned to nursing practice of therapeutic engagement in the promotion of hope and resilience under a strengths-based model. The SSW model facilitates a collaborative and ethical process that is informed by the person with lived experience and supported by evidence-based practice. This innovative model incorporates reflective practice opportunities to enhance therapeutic engagement and expand the brief therapy skills base of mental health nursing.