# Paradoxes in Mental Healthcare: Exploring service gaps in treatment and care for patients with extensive hospitalization experience

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### Abstract

Patients with extensive hospitalization experience present challenges for mental healthcare by disrupting continuity of care across service systems. This study explores how mental healthcare services address the needs of these patients, focusing on service gaps between hospitalization and community services. By examining the underlying reasons for their reliance on hospitals, the study offers insights into the lived experiences of this marginalized group. The study aims to provide knowledge that can enhance treatment and care for patients with severe mental disorder.

Using a narrative explanatory design, we interviewed 14 patients with extensive hospitalization experience. A holistic-content analysis revealed shortcomings in community services that contributed to frequent hospitalizations. These inconsistencies contributed to paternalistic treatment and collaboration issues, misaligning services with patients' needs. Patients were frequently labeled as "difficult" and placed at inappropriate levels of care, sometimes resorting to extreme measures to access the care they required.

The study highlights paradoxes and contradictions between goals, policies and service provision in mental healthcare. Patients were caught between two extremes entrenched in a struggle with services, either to gain access to support or to break free from service constraints. We argue that better access to institution-based treatment and care could provide benefits to these patients and help bridge service gap. Establishing long-term, well-staffed residential facilities would not only relieve hospitals of the burden of frequent readmissions but also enhance service integration. This would provide a much-needed middle ground, ensuring that patients receive the appropriate level of care while preventing unnecessary hospitalization.

### Recent Publications

1. Chow, W., Ajaz, A., & Priebe, S. (2019). "What drives changes in institutionalised mental health care? A qualitative study of the perspectives of professional experts." Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology 54.
2. Hustoft, K., Larsen, T., Brønnick, K., Joa, I., Johannessen, J., & Ruud, T. (2022). "Psychiatric patients’ attitudes towards being hospitalized: a national multicentre study in Norway." BMC Psychiatry 22.
3. Mutschler, C., Lichtenstein, S., Kidd, S., A., & Davidson, L. (2019). "Transition Experiences Following Psychiatric Hospitalization: A systematic Review of the Literature." Community Mental Health Journal 55(8): 1255-1274

4. Salisbury, T., Killaspy, H., & King, M. (2017). The relationship between deinstitutionalization and quality of care in longer-term psychiatric and social care facilities in Europe: A cross-sectional study. European Psychiatry, 42, 95-102. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eurpsy.2017.01.001.

5. Smith, P., Nicaise, P., Giacco, D., Bird, V., Bauer, M., Ruggeri, M., Welbel, M., Pfennig, A., Lasalvia, A., Moskalewicz, J., Priebe, S., & Lorant, V. (2020). "Use of psychiatric hospitals and social integration of patients with psychiatric disorders: a prospective cohort study in five European countries." Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology 55(11): 1425-1438..

Biography

Henrik Wang Iversen is a clinical psychologist working at the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, University Hospital of North Norway. Here he works with admitted patients suffering from severe mental illness and comorbid substance abuse. He is a trained qualitative researcher with narrative methods as his specialty, taking his PhD at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. This paper is part of the larger PhD study which explores the experiences of patients with extensive hospitalization experience through narrative methods. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how healthcare services can be better tailored to meet the needs of patients who struggle to navigate the current service system

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