

Improving risk management for violence in mental health services: a multimethods approach

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

There is considerable public concern over the risk of harm from mentally ill people, and patients are sometimes stigmatised as a result. Our aim in this programme was to improve the accuracy of clinicians' risk assessments and risk management. In the early stages we found that too much importance was placed on complicated mathematical scores of risk, which are often wrong. This approach can work better if the clinician combines this method with observing the problems that occur during rehabilitation, such as housing difficulties, poor social support, misusing drugs and alcohol and not continuing with treatment. These were the most important problems to deal with, especially if they directly caused violence.

We developed a new model of risk assessment and management using Bayesian networks. These take into account the factors that cause violence. These are the factors that clinicians must try to change if they want to prevent violence from happening. The model was based on the research evidence that we built up throughout the programme. It is currently in a preliminary format on a laptop computer, ready for developing software that can be used by clinicians in the future in the form of an application (app) after further programming. We have tested it with clinicians and service users, who have found it very useful and who have made important contributions to its development in the next stage.

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