

Domain: Paediatric and Adolescent Psychiatry

Curium Handling Aggression in Psychiatry

Outline:

Curium is an academic centre for paediatric and adolescent psychiatry. The centre invests in policies and measures aimed at preventing and de-escalating undesirable forms of conduct. One of these measures is the training course "Handling Aggression". The emphasis of this training course is on the prevention of aggression.

In addition, a Client Care Incidents Reporting Committee [*commissie Melding Incidenten Cliëntenzorg* (MIC Committee)] has been established, which has made it easier to report incidents. The objective of the Committee is to learn from reported incidents in order to prevent them from reoccurring.

Problem and risk analysis:

Aggression and safety are essential in the treatment of children and adolescents with serious mental problems. In everyday life, children, adolescents, parents/guardians and employees are regularly confronted with either their own or other people's aggression. Patient care providers also encounter incidents that do not involve aggression, but that involve the safety and treatment of children and adolescents (such as running away, falling down, forgetting medication). This requires a framework for handling aggression and for guaranteeing the safety of patients and employees.

Action objectives:

Avoiding aggression. Curium seeks to give their employees a sense of safety. Joint responsibility and clarity are also key factors.

Target groups:

Patients, parents/guardians, and own employees.

Context:

The approach can be used in all care facilities. Curium trainers will offer this upon request. It is primarily attractive to institutions seeking a uniform approach to the problem of aggression, since the training courses are offered to all units of the institutions. (The contents vary by unit, since the training must be adapted to practical use as much as possible.)

Effectiveness of implementation:

There has been a 20% increase in the number of reports since 2004. There were 334 reports in 2005 (versus 227 in 2004). There was a slight decline in 2006.

Starting points / Vision

Curium uses the following starting points in respect of its safety policy:

- Undesirable patient behaviour is addressed using a method that describes the process of aggressive behaviour and analyses the safety risks.
- Resources and measures such as fixation and separation can be used only in accordance with the steps agreed in the treatment plan and using command and physical control (CFB) methods.
- Consideration must be given to:
 - o The spatial layout, i.e. the layout must be organised and, if required, not accessible to unauthorised persons.
 - o The furnishing of rooms, i.e. taking into account the safety policy.
 - o Communication resources, e.g. an effective alarm system.
- The staff on duty must report all patient care incidents to the MIC Committee. This reporting requirement is not intended to point out the culprits, but to learn from the incident and to prevent it from reoccurring.
- The authorities, competences and responsibilities at Curium are clearly co-ordinated. Sufficient employees are available for each task and an effective organisational structure is in place. It is important to prevent individual employees from operating on their own, if possible.

Scientific foundations:

The approach used by Curium is based on the RADAR method. The practical theory continues to be a thorough method for intervention in (serious) behavioural problems. The RADAR method can also be very effective for all other problem areas, including (somatic) care and (psychosocial/mental) guidance for patients. Since the method is based on both healthy and unhealthy behaviour, the terminology can be easily understood and used by everyone.

Methodology / Mechanism

The organisation's consistent approach to aggression control allows consistent action to be taken in respect of clients. The measures help to boost employees' confidence, making it less likely that they will resort to physical action.

Operationalisation:

The employees are offered customised training courses, which are defined in a training cycle. The training course is also where problem areas in the safety policy can be expressed and discussed. Feedback on these problems is provided to supervisors or to the MIC Committee. Information on the safety policy is provided by means of basic training courses. Human Resources informs new employees about safety at work through an information leaflet and through the Safety Policy Memorandum. Parents and children are informed through the information leaflet issued by Curium and through social workers (parent coaches) involved with the organisation.

In case of an incident, the employee completes a form that is subsequently signed by his or her supervisor. The completed forms are registered and classified by

number. Monthly statements are generated in order to gain insight into the quantities, locations and times of the incidents. The supervisor is responsible for actively monitoring the care and aftercare process. The first care after an incident is provided by a direct colleague. If required, an employee may request (follow-up) aftercare from his or her supervisor. Such requests may also be directed to members of the MIC Committee.

The (semi-)residential treatment seeks to reduce, discharge or release emerging tensions and aggression by means of (daytime) programmes, group interventions, relaxation activities (sports, outdoor games, individual and group recreational activities or exploring the town or village) and an approach of continuous de-escalation. The management ensures that renovation and new construction projects take into account safety aspects in relation to aggression (i.e. a safe separation room, an effective alarm system, spacious corridors, safe stairs, etc.).

Guidance / training:

The institution educates employees about the safety policy through basic training courses. Human Resources informs new employees about safety at work through an information leaflet and through the Safety Policy Memorandum. Parents and children are informed through the information leaflet issued by Curium and through social workers (parent coaches) involved.

Every employee maintaining contacts with patients is expected to know the theory and practice of the method and, if applicable, master the physical techniques based on the command and physical control (CFB) method. All employees are therefore offered a job-specific programme consisting of physical actions, basic training courses, team training courses, refresher courses, and drills. New employees of Curium are also offered this type of training upon commencement of their employment.

Quality monitoring, process and product evaluation:

Assurance of the safety policy occurs through biannual safety meetings with all supervisors from all clusters and the Head of the Facilities Department under the supervision of the physician with authorised responsibilities pursuant to the [Dutch] Special Admissions into Mental Hospitals Act (BOPZ). The agenda is determined by input from:

- The supervisor
- Intermediate MIC reports
- Items from the training course “Handling Aggression”

This results in an annual quality report.

Success factors:

The MIC Committee has found that the safety policy is becoming more firmly embedded in the general policy of Curium with regard to patient care. This is

partly due to the biannual safety policy meetings and the attention received from the Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

Failure factors:

Providing clarity to both patients and employees is critical. Everyone should know the procedures in case of escalations, which means that all clusters within the organisations must participate in the training courses. It is of utmost importance that supervisors are also convinced of the necessity of acquiring de-escalating skills. The time investment (for trainers and employees) is significant.

Contact:

Mineke Norder

Telephone +31 (0)71 515 96 77

h.c.norder@curium.nl

www.curium.nl