What is this research about?

Inpatient hospitalization is one of the most expensive types of treatment for youth who have mental health problems. As a result, it is important to understand what affects: (1) how long youth stay in hospital for mental health problems once they are hospitalized, and (2) how often youth are readmitted to hospital for mental health concerns. Some research studies have found that demographic factors (for example, age and gender) and the type of mental health problem that youth experience affect how long they stay in hospital and whether they get readmitted. However, other studies have not found the same results. This study aimed to clarify the specific factors that affect how long youth stay in hospital for mental health problems and how likely they are to be readmitted in the future.

What did the researcher do?

Researchers in London, Ontario examined length of stay and readmission to adult psychiatric hospital beds for 2,445 youth (ages 12 to 19) across 69 hospitals in Ontario. They considered a wide range of factors that might affect how long youth stay in hospital for a mental health problem and whether they get readmitted. Some of the factors they examined were age, gender, level of education, history of sexual abuse or physical abuse, type of mental health problem, and intellectual disability, among other factors.

What did the researcher find?

The factors linked to longer stays in hospital for youth with mental health problems included:

- Being older
- Being male

What you need to know:

On average, youth admitted to psychiatric hospital beds in Ontario stay in hospital for 16 days. When hospitalized, the length of time that youth spend in the hospital depends most on the type of mental health problem they have. Specifically, youth with schizophrenia, mood disorders, eating disorders, and intellectual disability tend to have longer stays in the hospital compared to youth without these types of problems. Age is also an important factor affecting how long youth with mental health problems stay in hospital, with older youth tending to have longer stays than younger youth.
- Having experienced a disruption in school or work
- Having schizophrenia, an eating disorder, a personality disorder, or an intellectual disability.

The factors linked to a shorter length of stay for youth admitted to psychiatric hospital beds were:

- A higher level of education
- Being discharged against medical advice
- Having an adjustment disorder.

The factors linked to an increased chance of readmission to a psychiatric hospital bed were:

- Being older
- Being involved with the police
- Living in a group home or an assisted care facility
- Having a history of sexual abuse
- A dysfunctional relationship between the youth and their family
- Having schizophrenia, a mood disorder, a personality disorder, an eating disorder, or an intellectual disability.

Higher levels of education were linked to a decreased chance of being readmitted to the hospital for a mental health problem.

**How can you use this research?**

This research may be of interest to health care professionals and administrators. It reveals some of the factors that affect how long youth tend to stay in inpatient psychiatric beds and how likely it is that youth will be readmitted to mental health beds. This information can be useful for developing treatment plans that might help reduce how much time youth with mental health problems spend in hospital.

**About the researchers**

Shannon L. Stewart, Chester Kam and Phillip Baiden are with the Child and Parent Resource Institute in London, Ontario. This Research Snapshot is based on their article “Predicting length of stay and readmission for psychiatric inpatient youth admitted to adult mental health beds in Ontario, Canada,” which was published in *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, DOI: 10.1111/camh.12022.

**Keywords**

length of stay; readmission; mental health inpatient; youth

This Research Snapshot is based on an article that has been critically appraised for quality and susceptibility to bias.

**Evidence Exchange Network (EENet; formerly OMHAKEN)** has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots in the field of mental health and addictions in Ontario. EENet actively promotes the use of research evidence in decision-making by supporting engagement and connections between researchers and mental health and addictions stakeholders across Ontario. EENet works to develop targeted KT products and tools and supports interactive exchanges. It is supported by the Ontario Government and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. This summary was written by Andrea Flynn.

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