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Mental health in regional emergency departments: unsafe and inequitable

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For many Australians seeking assistance with mental health problems, the Emergency Department is the primary point of contact, and it is therefore imperative that emergency services are adequately equipped to assess and manage mental health related presentations.

The findings of a recent study [conducted by the authors] of seven regional emergency departments confirmed that regional emergency services experience great difficulty coping with mental health related presentations.

Some of the barriers include: lack of afterhours specialist mental health expertise; and grossly inadequate patient transportation systems impacting significantly on timely and appropriate treatment for the mentally ill.

Study participants reported extreme under-resourcing, and enormous pressure to manage a wide variety of high risk presentations without adequate training, support, and safety measures in place.

The lack of adequate mental health resourcing to regional and rural EDs is a well-documented and long-standing problem. To ensure adequate and equitable care for people with mental illness, and a safe environment for emergency staff, these issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

National Forum on Safety and Quality in Health Care

25 October – 27 October 2010
The National Convention Centre, Canberra

Society, Regulators and Health Providers: a clash of expectations?

The Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS), with key partners the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and ACT Health, is delighted to host the National Forum on Safety and Quality in Health Care in Canberra, 25-27 October 2010. To be held at the National Convention Centre, the program will be of national importance for anyone working on safety and quality in health care.

The theme is Society, Regulators and Health Providers: a clash of expectations?

With speakers ranging from local health journalists to international safety and quality leaders, this timely program will tackle high profile issues on the national agenda.

The program has been designed by representatives from national bodies, the public and private sectors along with consumer representation.

Join us in Australia’s capital for this dynamic program, a busy exhibition, a vibrant social calendar and a chance to meet and network with colleagues.

For further information please contact the conference organisers sapmea via Annabel Holliss phone 08 8274 6050 or email aholliss@sapmea.asn.au or visit www.sapmea.asn.au/forumsqhc2010/