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Topic: EPV16 - e-Poster 16: Mental Retardation

Learning Disabilities: Issues in Acute Care Settings

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Introduction: Being admitted into hospital is a stressful and worrying time for any patient. This is even more significant for patients with learning disabilities who are in a vulnerable position. During my experience in an acute medical ward, I came across patients with learning disability and saw the difficulties surrounding their care. This involved problems with communication including consent and assessment of mental capacity.

Aims: The aims are to 1) explore the impact of learning disability in accessing physical health care and health inequalities associated with it 2) explore the issue of capacity assessment 3) to look at the legal frameworks available.

Method: Literature search including data from Pubmed and NHS evidence was done to assess the health inequalities experienced by people with learning disabilities. The legal framework including Mental Capacity Act (2005) and Deprivation Of Liberty Safeguards (2009) were also looked into.

Results: People with learning disability experience stigma when accessing acute health care. The clinicians' knowledge of communication systems and legal framework available to support patients with learning disability is limited.

Conclusion: Healthcare professionals must have training for better understanding of learning disability and the challenges of working with people with learning disability. It is important to identify and address barriers in communication. Attitudes and beliefs of health care providers are important in providing optimal care for some of the most vulnerable members of society.