

# High Level Care & Absconding from the Acute Inpatient Service

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## 2 related issues

- Absconding from the inpatient service (Open Unit)
- Pressure on Extra Care Unit beds in the inpatient service 6/44 or (3/22) x 2
- Interaction between the 2 pressures



# Absconding (AWOL)

- **Absent without leave** : *is a broad term which refers to all consumers who have left the service against medical advice and /or approval.*
- **Absconded**: *refers to a person who is under Section 9 or 12 of the Mental Health Act who has left the service against medical advice and /or approval .*



# Extra Care Unit (ECU)

- Victorian policy of a 'bed is a bed' (low care or high care)
- Current number of beds available 3 beds on each Unit = 3/22 or 6/44
- Recent EBA prohibits patients in excess of beds in ECU area (only exceptional circumstances)



# Case Example

- AWOL patients from IPU 2003 & 2005

	– 2003	2005
▪ Jan	9	15
▪ Feb	10	25
▪ March	18	15
▪ April	17	21
▪ May	15	23



# Case Example

- Risks associated with 'Absconding' for the patient
- Risks for the organisation



# St Vincent's Response

- Working Party – since early May; diverse membership from IPS staffing
- Prevention and Response to AWOL as focus
  - Literature review
  - Management has benchmarked practice with other services around the state



# Immediate measures

- Emphasis on Risk Assessment
- Development of AWOL policy in conjunction with Police with Categories of AWOL
- Emphasis on Incident Reporting – cross reference with Police figures
- Recording AWOL's daily returns book – data availability (RAPID)
- Police forms on G Drive
- Stamps for files
- log in/ out book
- increased activities in ECU areas
- Pyjamas



# Further response

- Development of Day Program
  - Development of purpose built space
  - Relocation of existing day program activities to this area
  - Review of existing activities program to develop more groups and increase the number of staff involved



# St. Vincent's Mental Health Ward Activity Program



St. Vincent's Mental Health Service  
Melbourne

What's on at St V's inpatient unit? Patients on inpatient units frequently complain of boredom and wards are often criticised for relying too much on the medical model in their approach to treatment for the acutely unwell. At St Vincent's Mental Health Service we are trying to address both these issues with our Ward Activity Program. We wanted to do away with the time-filler approach to ward activities and provide therapeutic group interventions which equip patients with skills they are able to draw on long after they leave the ward environment. Here is a brief snapshot of some of the groups patients can participate in at St Vincent's Mental Health Service's Inpatient Unit:

## Focus Therapy Group:

Held in the Extra Care Unit, this is a lower-level psychotherapy group designed to meet needs of patients who are more regressed, more fragmented & have relatively shorter attention span. Grounded in Yalom's clinical research, theory & practice, this structured short group session of 45 minutes, focuses primarily on communication using a *here-and-now* approach.

## Identity and Symbols

In this group held in the Extra Care Unit, an intensive symbol based process is used to create concepts and images that help engage with patients and encourage communication.

## Images and the Self

This image based group aims to give inpatients a forum in which they can communicate using art as a narrative. Images are used to evoke memories and help patients connect with their emotions. Images are then created to represent or symbolise a particular emotion. This is a great opportunity for patients to ventilate feelings and articulate issues of importance using a different medium.

## Medication Information Group

The Medication Information Group provides a great opportunity for inpatients to discuss their medical and medication issues with the Inpatient Unit pharmacist and registrar. It's an informal session which covers different aspects of medication such as side-effects and adherence. It also provides a comfortable introduction for individual patients to catch up with the pharmacist during their stay at the IPU.

## Centering Time

The Relaxation group aims to allow patients to relax mind and body by listening to relaxing music and visualising a peaceful scene. It may also involve some Progressive Muscle Relaxation. The immediate benefits for patients include a reduction in generalised anxiety and cumulative stress, short periods of distraction from symptoms and an opportunity to have "time out" from the stimulation of the ward environment.



## Inpatient Psychotherapy Group

A higher-level psychotherapy group to help group-members learn more about the way they communicate & relate to others, using a *here-and-now* focus. The group, grounded in Yalom's clinical research, theory & practice, is based on his approach to group psychotherapy within a specialized clinical setting (IPU).

## Theatre of Life (Psychodrama)

This group provides an opportunity for group-members to develop healthy functional roles needed to build and/or enhance relationships, both within the group as well as with people in their own lives. Depending on the warm-up, group-members can set out scenarios from their own lives on a theatrical stage; a scenario can also emerge from the group as a collective theme. The setting out of these scenarios allows individuals to see more clearly the system that he/she is part of, & the roles & relationships that exist between him/her & his/her significant others.



	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday	10-Community Meeting –Margaret &Katie 10.30 Community Outing -Steve	1.45-3pm Football / Sports – Steve 2pm ; Activity Group /Open Art Studio-Louise 2.15 Psychotherapy- Lorraine &Anna  4pm Relaxation - Steve	6-8pm DVD / Cards Board Games
Tuesday	9AM – community Meeting 10.15 Community walk –Steve / Paul 11.30 Activity Group	1.30 – 2.15 Focus Therapy Group (ECU Ground Floor ) –Lorraine and Paul 2-3pm Discussion Group –Maurice 2-3pm Open Art Studio – Ann/ Mary 4pm Relaxation -Louise	6-8pm DVD / Cards Board Games
Wednesday	9am Community Meeting 10am Cooking (ECU) /Paul &Steve 10.15- 11.15 Theatre of Life / Anna Lorraine 10.30 Activity Group	2pm Community Outing / Steve and Nurses 1.45-3pm Library /Internet / Rowena & Paul 3.15- 4.15 Motivational Interviewing-Brian & Louise 4pm Relaxation – Paul	6-8pm DVD / Cards Board Games
Thursday	9-10am Theatre of Life/ Anna&Lorraine 10am Community Meeting 10.30 Community Outing / Steve 11am Massage / Paul Naomi	1.30 – 2.15 Focus Therapy Group (ECU 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor ) –Lorraine and Paul 1.45-2.30 Soccer – Oscar 2-3pm Spirituality and Life – Helen & Chris 2.30 Cooking Group Lorraine &Louise 4pm Relaxation	6-8pm DVD / Cards Board Games
Friday	9am Community Meeting / Louise & Steve 10am Open Art Studio- Ann &Mary	2-3pm Activity Group / Steve  4pm Relaxation / Steve	6-8pm DVD / Cards Board Games



# Where to from Here ?

- Further Evaluation of the Day Programme
  - Number of AWOL's
  - Patient Satisfaction
  - Review of Incident reports ? Reduction in Aggression.
- Research project linked to the Introduction of Drug and Alcohol Group
- Further Audit of ECU re length of stay

