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A NATIONAL EVALUATION OF MENTAL HEALTH INPATIENT STAFF MORALE IN ENGLAND

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Introduction: Improving the quality of care on psychiatric inpatient wards has been a major focus in recent mental health policy, a recurrent criticism being that contact between staff and patients is limited in time and therapeutic value. Change is unlikely to be achieved without recruitment and retention of a high quality and well-motivated work force.

Aim: The NHS commissioned national inpatient mental health staff morale study is intended to inform service planning and policy by delivering evidence on the morale of the inpatient mental health workforce and the clinical, organisational, architectural and human resources factors that influence it.

Methods: 100 wards in 17 area 'Trusts' are participating in the study, in addition to 40 community teams. The study will take place over two years, and has 6 modules:

1. A quantitative questionnaire for all staff in participating wards and
2. A comparison group in 20 community mental health teams and 20 crisis teams.
3. Case studies of 10 wards scoring in the top and bottom quartile for indicators of morale.
4. Repeated questionnaires for 20 wards in the second year to investigate how morale changes over time.
5. Staff who leave the wards in the course of the first year will be asked their reasons for leaving.
6. Links between rates of staff sickness and morale will be investigated.

Results: Questionnaires have been distributed to 3,500 staff with a response rate of 65%, results from which will be presented in 2009.