

“Getting something for nothing?”

The strengths, weaknesses and hidden costs of a student-led psychology service.

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The psychological impact of burn trauma is widely recognised, with sequelae often persisting years after the injury. Provision of specialist psychological care beyond the acute hospital phase can be variable, despite established efficacy regarding patient outcomes. An innovative psychology clinic was introduced to the existing multi-disciplinary outpatient service at a specialist burns centre. Utilising “free labour” provided by postgraduate psychology students, the pilot ran for 12 months. 344 student-hours were provided across 58 clinics. Consultations involved psychometric screening, reviews of coping, psycho-education and brief supportive counselling. A total of 428 consultations were provided, with 30% of patients being seen more than once. In addition to brief clinical interviews, screening measures looking at depressive and PTSD symptoms were administered. 25% of patient scores indicated moderate or severe depression and 22% scored above the cut-off for PTSD. Recommendation for ongoing psychological support was made following 42% of consultations. In 7% of cases, a referral for community psychology was made. Findings support and demonstrate the need for ongoing psychological care; highlight the strengths and weaknesses (and hidden costs) of student-led services; and offer a provisional model for cost-effective service provision.

Key Words

Psychology, PTSD, depression, multi-disciplinary

Nominated Stream for Oral Presentations

- Medical
- Nursing
- Allied Health
- Scientific

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- Care
- Prevention
- Research

