

Improving physical health for psychiatric patients detained in a low secure forensic psychiatric unit

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Background

People suffering from severe and enduring mental health problems have a life expectancy of 15-20 years less than the general population. The main cause of death is cardiovascular disease due to lifestyle factors, such as smoking, substance misuse and obesity. Physical health problems such as metabolic syndrome, diabetes and heart disease have a knock-on effect on motivation, self-esteem and concordance with treatment.

Over 60% of the general population and up to 80% of patients detained in forensic psychiatric units in the UK are classed as overweight or obese, with serious consequences to physical health.

Southfield Low Secure Unit is a 28-bed unit. Most patients suffer from treatment resistant schizophrenia and are prescribed high doses of antipsychotic medication, some up to 250% of the maximum recommended dose.

Aims and objectives

- To improve physical health
- To tackle obesity in patients detained in a low secure forensic psychiatric unit.

Method

Baseline data were collected using Body Mass Index (BMI) and Simple Physical Activity Questionnaire (SIMPAQ).

Patients were involved in:

- focus groups
- community meetings
- monthly physical health action group

There was input from the care team including psychology, occupational therapy, nursing, catering and security.

Qualitative data were collected from focus groups

Actions taken

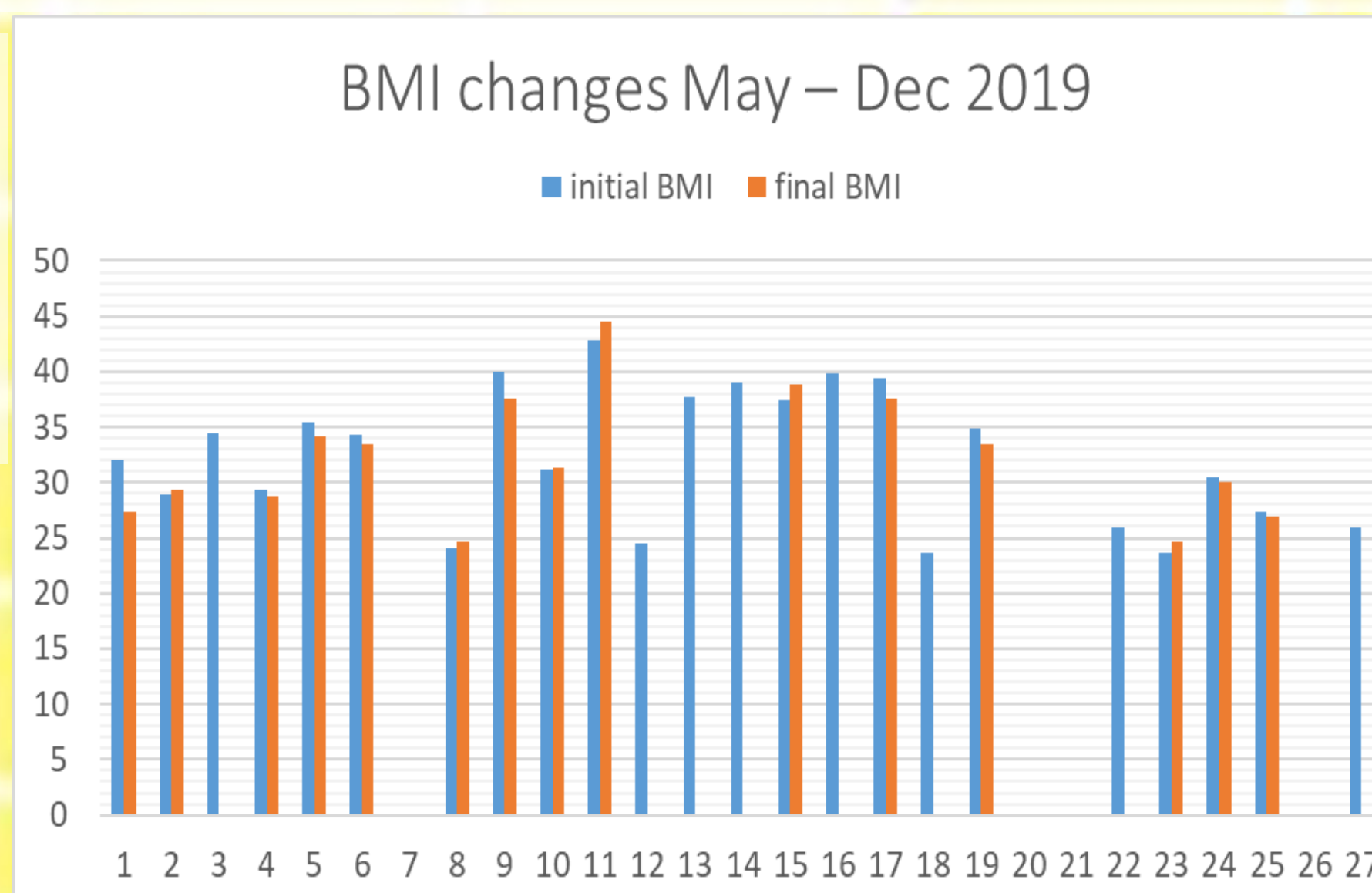
New activities were made available within the unit

Qualitative data were collected from focus groups

Activity challenges such as “3 weeks challenge” (patient led) and “Christmas Challenge” were carried out

A new unit leaflet with patient input was created

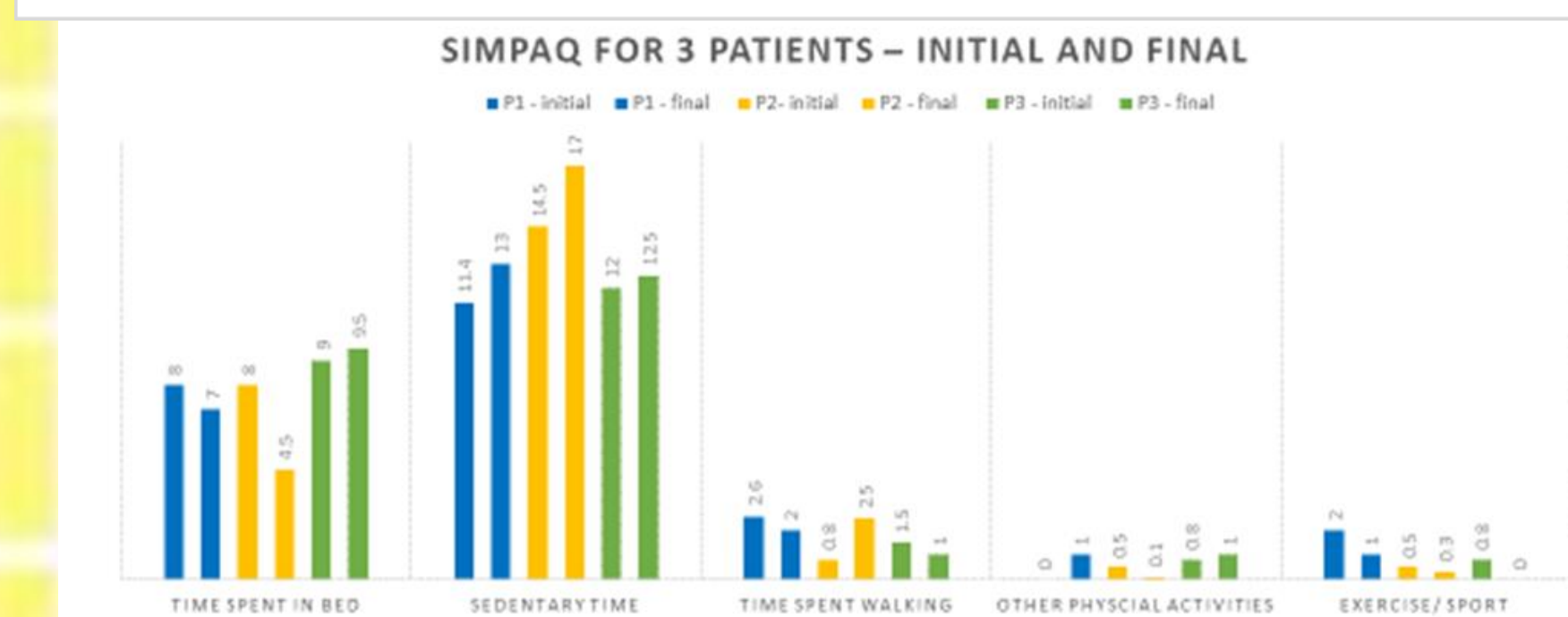
A new unit physical health board with patient input was started



Results

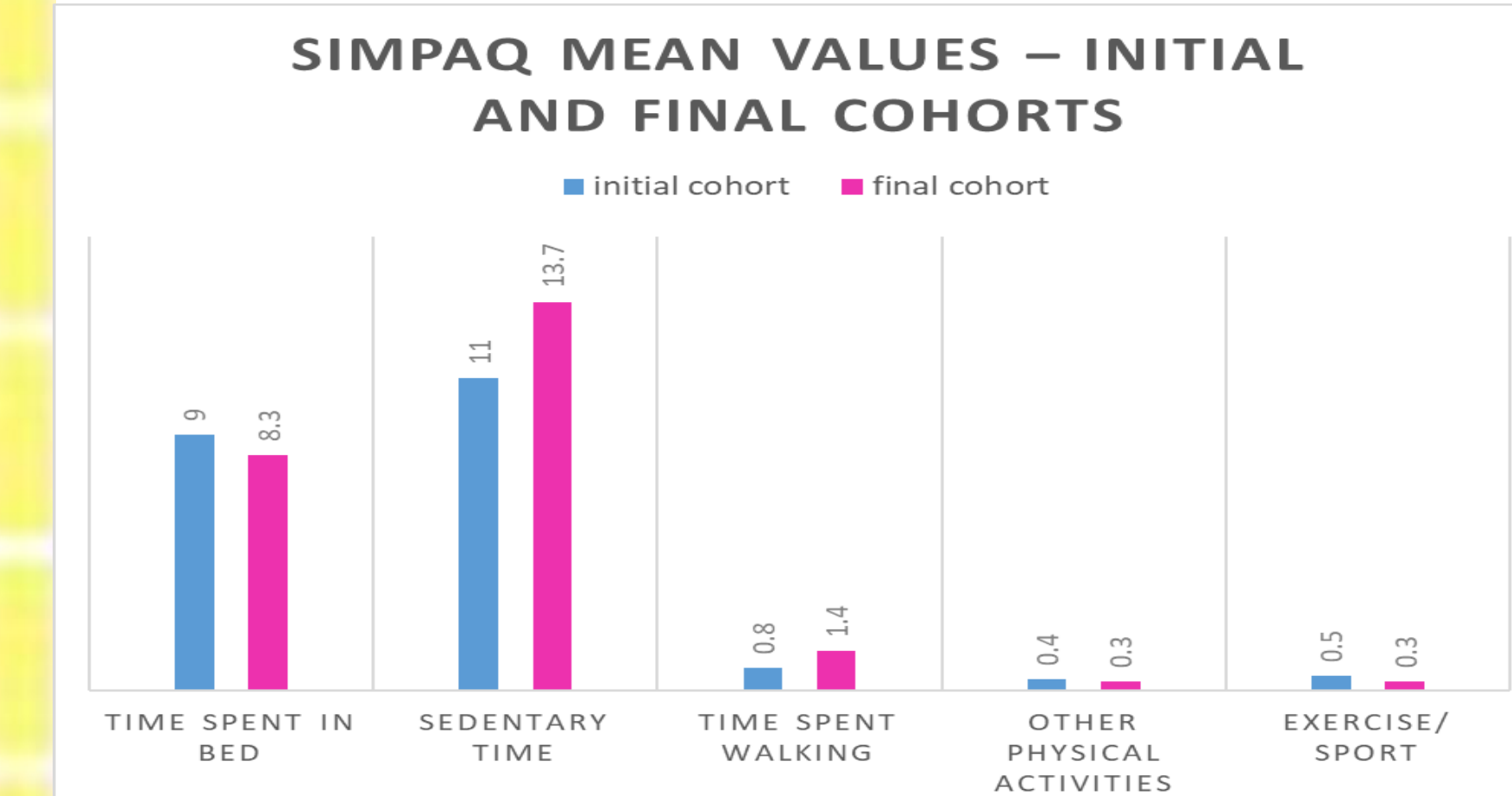
Modest change in the BMI – initial results ranging from BMI 23.6 – 42.8kg/m². Of the initial cohort (n=14), there has been weight loss (n=3), weight gain (n=3) and no change (n=8)

Initial SIMPAQ results showed that on average patients spend 19.8 hours per day either in bed or doing sedentary activities and only 1.68 hours per day walking or doing physical activities. This patterned has not changed.



Conclusions

The only 3 patients that were captured at the initial data collection and final results did not show a significant increase in physical activity. However, subjectively, they reported an increased in motivation and sense of wellbeing.



3 weeks challenge – patient feedback

It was a good event for socialising and people taking an interest in what it was all about.

It was a success!

I am pretty much pleased with myself for putting this challenge together and helping out a lot of people with their motivation for physical and mental health wellbeing. Big thanks to all the staff that helped out.

SOUTHFIELD LOW SECURE UNIT

Why is physical health important?
Keep well and out of hospital
Improves mood and well-being
Improves quality of life
Healthy body, healthy mind

How do you stay well?
Activity - keep moving and engage in outdoor activities
- 30 minutes a day
- walking, cycling, cleaning your room
Diet - enjoy a variety of fruits and vegetables
- cut down on crisps, chocolate, cookies, doughnuts, sugary drinks
- SUGARS - no more than 7 teaspoons of added sugar per day
Smoking - We are a smoke free Unit - cut down/stop smoking
- ask for help and nicotine replacement
Drugs and alcohol - most drugs will make you feel poorly - both body and mind
- using drugs will increase your hospital stay

What can you do at Southfield to keep healthy?
OT - Up and Out, cooking sessions
Psychology - Physical health and wellbeing group, mindfulness, DET skills group
Groups - rambling group, walking
On the wards/courtyard pool, Wii fit, table tennis, football
Access to the Gym

Housekeeping is a type of exercise
It keeps your physical and mental health well.

Physical health checks help to identify and prevent physical health related conditions.

Nutrition food reduces risk of cardiac disease, diabetes, cancer and stroke. The menu provided includes healthier options. You can choose healthy food - see your care plan.

Have more fruits and vegetables. See your care plan for more information.

Smoking cessation helps improve your health and reduce the risk of cancer.

Lessons learnt

Stakeholders – it is imperative to have others’ help and support

Choose achievable targets

Need to choose the right method for the type of improvement desired

*Special thanks to all the team members at Southfield Low Secure Unit

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