NIHR | North West London Patient Safety Research Collaboration

NHS Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

#mhimprove

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London

Delivering safer care to service users who are agitated, confused, or distressed: mixed-methods improvement research within the acute general hospital setting

Background

- It can be challenging and costly to safely care for people with **agitated, confused, or distressed behaviours** within acute general hospital wards [1]
- Such patients may have **unmet needs** relating to coexisting conditions such as mental health problems, learning disabilities, or dementia [2]
- These individuals may be at greater **risk of harm** in hospital due to: hazards within the non-purpose-built care environment [3]; suboptimal monitoring [3]; diagnostic overshadowing [4]; gaps in staff training, experience, and skills [5 6]; restrictive interventions [5 6]; and risks linked to self-harm, aggression, or agitation [3 7]

Aims and objectives

- To examine the nature and scale of **patient safety problems** experienced by acute general hospital patients with agitated, confused, or distressed behaviours
- To **co-design solutions** which support ward staff to deliver safer care for these patients

Service user and carer involvement

- An **advisory group** of service users and carers will shape project decision-making throughout
- We will invite and support service users and carers to assume **lived experience researcher roles**

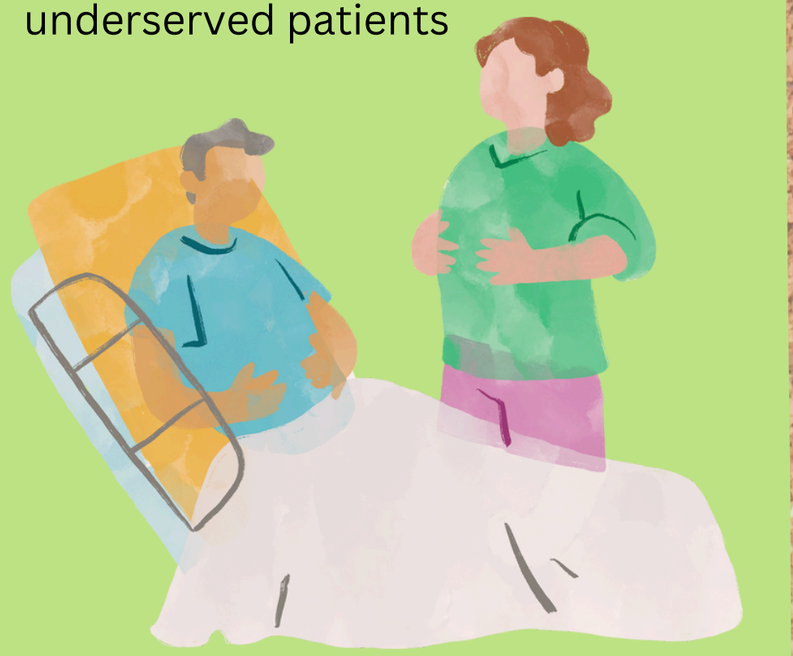
Methods

We will conduct:

- A **case-control study** using patient records and incident reports to estimate the scale and nature of harm amongst adult inpatients requiring enhanced care (assigned a behavioural observation chart and/or 1:1 care) relative to matched controls
- **In-depth qualitative interviews** with service users, carers, and staff to explore patient safety concerns; ward staff support needs; and best practices in safe care delivery
- An **evidence review** mapping available guidance on best practices in delivering safe care for these service users
- A **participatory co-design study** involving service users, carers, and ward staff to develop implementable solutions to identified patient safety challenges

Anticipated impacts

- **Novel insights** generated as to the nature of harm experienced by agitated, confused, or distressed patients when in hospital
- Co-designed **interventions** which begin to address inequalities in patient safety outcomes for these underserved patients



References

1. Wood et al. (2018). *Int J Nurs Stud.* | **2.** Dickinson et al. (2020). *Br J Nurs.* | **3.** Nolan et al. (2007). *Br J Nurs.* | **4.** Tarver & Steunkel (2016). *J Nurs Care Qual.* | **5.** Care Quality Commission (2020). *Assessment of Mental Health Services in Acute Trusts* | **6.** Health Services Safety Investigations Body (2023). | **7.** James (2020). *Cogn Behav Ther.*

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