

Mental Health Carers Voice

Update: Safety in Mental Health and CCTV

Carers ACT believe that safety and dignity should be at the heart of all decisions regarding mitigating risk within TCH and have maintained this position consistently throughout our advocacy in this space.

Currently, there has been discussion in the sector on the proposed installation of closed-circuit television within the Adult Mental Health Unit and the Mental Health Short Stay Unit. In our work advocating with and for mental health carers we have been taking the stance that other preventative initiatives such as the rollout of safe-wards is a higher priority in reducing violence on the wards.

Carers ACT recently represented mental health carers in a workshop on the proposed installation of CCTV and raised some key issues that would need to be addressed before a decision could be reached regarding whether CCTV would be an acceptable strategy for mitigating risk.

We stated that if CCTV was to be considered;

1. The specific purpose of the CCTV footage needed to be clear and restricted.
2. Consideration and risk-assessment to its visibility needed to be examined from a consent perspective, a deterrent perspective and from a paranoid-illness perspective
3. It needed to be determined whether the footage would be viewed live or only retrospectively if requested.
4. How long was footage going to be stored and how would it be stored
5. Staff needed to be aware that the surveillance system would not alter their obligations for undertaking rounds and maintaining awareness of the location and wellness of patients (ie. the surveillance system could not be 'relied on').
6. There were comments regarding the footage's potential to be used for staff training. It was our perspective that this was an inappropriate use of the footage and that viewing of the footage should be more restricted than this.
7. The use of the footage as evidence in court needed to be explored in more detail. There is concern regarding if a staff member was involved in a violent incident that the capacity of the patient involved needed to be assessed as soon as possible by a third-party to the incident.
8. In regards to an allegation from a patient being made, this also needs to be considered in the context of the Mental Health Act 2015 whereby capacity is assumed unless demonstrated otherwise and regardless of who is accused there needs to be appropriate and transparent escalation of reports.
9. Carers and consumers need a clear avenue for having footage reviewed if there are concerns regarding patient safety or risk. This does not mean that carers or consumers have the right to view footage.
10. The use of the footage in regards to staff performance, ie. not de-escalating situations, inappropriate use of restrictive practice, workplace harassment or assault needs to be articulated. Is this an appropriate use of the footage? Is there a responsibility to staff and patients if the footage exists for it to be reviewed in this manner?
11. There needs to be personal places such as bedrooms and bathrooms that are excluded from being surveilled and patients need to be able to access these locations when they do not wish to be surveilled. In addition to this staff need to be aware of the lack of surveillance in these spaces and

take precautions to not be in an unsurveilled area alone with a patient or to allow patients that are a risk concern to enter others bedrooms etc.

12. ACT Health MHJHADS needs to consult with the relevant peak bodies on this issue and allow appropriate time for a consultation process to occur.
13. Any committee or group with review privileges should involve consumer representation.

The meeting concluded with a commitment from Bruno Aloisi Executive Director A/g that a paper would be drafted and distributed to the workshop attendees regarding these details. However, we are yet to see this paper and are advocating strongly for the need for further consultation and further details.

Please contact myself - Alex Scetrine at Carers ACT if you have any additional comments or queries and we will keep you updated as this progresses.

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