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THE VIENNESE PSYCHIATRIC INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - DIAGNOSTIC DISTRIBUTION

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Background: Psychiatric intensive care is supposed to offer treatment and to hold patients with psychiatric illness, if they pose a threat to themselves or to others.

Methods: A chart review was performed including 100 consecutive inpatients (52% females, age: 45.7±17.8 years) treated at the Viennese psychiatric intensive care unit (PICU) in the years 2008 and 2009. Clinical key features and the distribution of mental disorders (according to ICD-10) in these patients are reported here.

Results: The mean duration of stay was 18.9±14.8 days. 52% of patients were admitted involuntarily. 18% suffered from organic mental disorder (12% from delirium), 20% were diagnosed with mental disorders due to psychoactive substance use (9% alcohol dependency, 6% benzodiazepine dependency, 5% multiple drug use), 16% had a diagnosis of schizophrenia, 10% of schizoaffective disorder and 5% of transient psychotic disorder. 20% suffered from recurrent depressive disorder, 15% from bipolar affective disorder and 3% from a single depressive episode. 8% fulfilled diagnostic criteria of a neurotic, stress-related or somatoform disorder. 12% had eating disorders, 9% had personality disorders and 1% was diagnosed with mental retardation. Only 15% of patients had a first episode of psychiatric illness. 4% were admitted after an accident and 21% after a suicide attempt (45% poisoning, 25% jumping from height, 20% cutting/piercing with sharp object, 5% vehicular impact, 5% self-immolation).

Conclusions: All major psychiatric diagnoses can be found at the Viennese PICU, either if patients are in a life-threatening condition, or if additional somatic illnesses require intensive care management.