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**Aims.** Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) poses unique challenges for social interaction and communication skills development in children. Various interventions, including virtual reality (VR) and social skills training, have emerged as potential approaches to address these challenges. This systematic review aims to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of VR Social Skills Training with Standard In-Person Social Skills Training in improving social interaction skills and reducing social anxiety levels in children with ASD.

**Methods.** A search was conducted across electronic databases (PubMed, PsycINFO, Cochrane Library and Scopus) for relevant studies published from 2000 to December 2023. Inclusion criteria include randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and observational studies comparing VR Social Skills Training with Standard In-Person Social Skills Training in children diagnosed with ASD within the specified age range. Two independent reviewers assessed study eligibility, conducted data extraction, and evaluated study quality. The primary outcomes included changes in social interaction skills and reduced social anxiety levels.

**Results.** From 1,239 studies initially identified, 25 met inclusion criteria post-screening. VR interventions ( $n = 12$ ) showed significant improvements (80%) in social interaction skills (15% average anxiety reduction). Varied platforms were utilised, including virtual social scenarios. Using conventional techniques, standard interventions ( $n = 13$ ) demonstrated improvements (75%) with a 12% average anxiety reduction. Comparative effectiveness between VR and Standard approaches lacked consistent significance. Subgroup analyses showed shorter interventions (4–8 weeks) induced rapid skill improvements, while longer-term ones (12+ weeks) sustained anxiety reduction. Younger participants (6–8 years) exhibited more pronounced skill enhancements and higher baseline anxiety correlated with greater improvement.

**Conclusion.** This review provides an overview of the current evidence on the comparative effectiveness of VR Social Skills Training and Standard In-Person Social Skills Training for children with ASD. The implications of this review extend to clinicians, educators, and policymakers involved in developing and implementing interventions aimed at improving social outcomes in children with ASD.

Abstracts were reviewed by the RCPsych Academic Faculty rather than by the standard *BJPsych Open* peer review process and should not be quoted as peer-reviewed by *BJPsych Open* in any subsequent publication.

## Admissions to the National Forensic Mental Health Service Anteceding and Succeeding Its Relocation: A Dundrum Forensic Redevelopment Evaluation Study (D-FOREST)

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**Aims.** The Central Mental Hospital is the Republic of Ireland's only secure forensic hospital and the seat of its National Forensic Mental Health Service (NFMHS). We scrutinised admission patterns in the NFMHS during the period 01/01/2018–01/10/2023; before and after relocating from the historic 1850 site in Dundrum to a modern facility in Portrane on 13/11/2022.

**Methods.** This prospective longitudinal cohort study included all patients admitted during the above period. The study initially commenced in Dundrum and continued afterwards in Portrane. Data gathered included demographics, diagnoses, capacity to consent to treatment, and the need for intramuscular medication (IM) after admission. Therapeutic security needs and urgency of need for admission were collated from DUNDRUM-1 and DUNDRUM-2 scores rated pre-admission. Hours spent in seclusion during the first day, week, and month after admission were calculated. Data were collected as part of the Dundrum Forensic Redevelopment Evaluation Study (D-FOREST).

**Results.** There were 117 admissions during the 69-month period. The majority were male ( $n = 98$ ). Most were admitted from prisons (87%). Schizophrenia was the most common diagnosis (55.8%). Mean DUNDRUM-1 triage security scores were in the medium-security range (2.84–3.15) during this period. At the time of admission, 53.8% required seclusion, 25.6% required IM medication, and 79.5% lacked capacity to consent to treatment. Those who required seclusion on admission had worse scores on the DUNDRUM-2 triage urgency scale ( $F = 20.9$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). On linear logistic regression, the most parsimonious model resolved with five predictors of hours in seclusion during the first day and week, which were: D1 item 8 – Victim sensitivity/public confidence issues, D1 item 10 – Institutional behaviour, D2 item 2 – Mental health, D2 item 4 – Humanitarian, and D2 item 6 – Legal urgency. 50% required IM medication during their first week of admission and these patients had significantly worse scores on: D1 item 8 – Victim sensitivity/public confidence issues, D1 item 10 – Institutional behaviour, D2 item 2 – Mental health, and D2 item 4 – Humanitarian (all  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion.** There was an increase in the frequency of admissions since relocating to Portrane. The results suggest that there was no change in overall triage security and urgency needs during the time period in question. Major mental illness related factors impacted the need for seclusion early in the admission, whereas factors linked to prison behaviour or personality-related factors were more associated with an ongoing need for seclusion at month one.

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## Ketamine Efficacy Across All Formulations in Treatment Resistant Depression in Adult Population: A Rapid Review

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**Aims.** The primary aim of this rapid review was to evaluate the evidence base for the efficacy of ketamine across all formulations and routes of administrations in the treatment of adult patients with treatment resistant depression (TRD).

**Methods.** This rapid review retrieved controlled trials on use of ketamine across all of its formulations, including all isomers and across all routes of administration in TRD patients for achieving response and remission. This review included PubMed and PsycINFO databases. The retrieved studies were screened with the help of a screening tool and data were extracted by using data extraction forms by two authors. The studies were evaluated for quality of evidence, ethical issues and critically analyzed. Narrative synthesis was used for data synthesis.

**Results.** This review retrieved 10 placebo controlled randomized controlled trials (RCT) on intravenous (IV) ketamine, IV esketamine, intranasal (IN) ketamine and IN esketamine in TRD patients. IV ketamine and esketamine showed higher rates of remission and response in comparison with placebo groups in TRD patients. There was no significant improvement in response and remission rates in TRD patients on IN esketamine in comparison with placebo. The adverse effects in the intervention groups were of mild to moderate severity and short lasting mostly resolving within a day.

**Conclusion.** This review recommends IV ketamine and esketamine can help in achieving early response and remission in TRD patients and it seems to be a well-tolerated treatment option. Further studies are needed to assess these issues around safety, ease of administration and potential for dependence.

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## Dementia in the United Arab Emirates: Factors Affecting the Time From Symptom Emergence to Formal Diagnosis

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**Aims.** Dementia is a debilitating neurodegenerative disorder that can negatively impact the lives of those affected and their families. Providing safe and person-centered care for individuals living with dementia is a global need with particular emphasis on providing individuals and their families with a rapid diagnosis of their condition following the commencement of symptoms. This study aimed to establish the mean duration of cognitive symptoms before a formal diagnosis of dementia is given in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). We also studied demographic and symptom-specific factors affecting the time for dementia to be formally diagnosed. Our study examined a global issue through a more localized lens to identify areas for improvement.

**Methods.** The study involved extracting and analyzing anonymous data from the electronic medical records of dementia patients at Al-Ain Hospital, UAE. Following ethical approval, the data for individuals diagnosed with any form of dementia from 01/01/2010 to 31/12/2019 were extracted using a set of related diagnostic

codes. A short questionnaire was completed for every record that matched the search criteria. Demographic information was collected in addition to details of diagnosis, presenting symptoms, comorbidities, and medications.

A two-tailed independent t-test was conducted to assess the effect of demographic characteristics (gender, nationality, and age) on the time to receive a diagnosis of dementia. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess the effect of initial symptoms, including forgetfulness, agitation/aggression, and hallucinations, on the time taken to receive a diagnosis.

**Results.** Out of the total sample of 825, 442 (53.6%) were females, with 518 (63%) being Emirati citizens. The mean age of the studied sample at the time of diagnosis was 78 years (SD = 11.1). Alzheimer's dementia, 335 (40.6%), was the most common subtype diagnosed. The mean duration of symptoms (DUS) before formal diagnosis was 34.6 months (SD = 28.8). A statistically significant relationship was found between age and DUS, with those over 70 years of age at the time of diagnosis more likely to have a longer DUS ( $p < 0.001$ ). There was a statistically significant mean difference in the DUS and some initial symptoms, namely agitation/aggression ( $p < 0.001$ ), lability ( $p < 0.003$ ), disinhibition ( $p < 0.001$ ), and hallucinations ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusion.** To our knowledge, this is the first study of its kind in the UAE. Future investigation in this area is much needed, and this study will provide the foundations for dementia awareness campaigns encouraging early presentation to the services.

No financial sponsorship has been received for this study.

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## Drift in Depression Prevalence Disorder in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries Over 30 Years

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**Aims.** Depression disorder is a major public health problem and a serious medical illness which negatively affects people's daily life. The WHO's International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) defines this set of disorders ranging from mild to moderate to severe. Estimated annual percentage change (EAPC) is a useful statistic that is used to measure trends in rates over time-period.

The aim of this study was to compute the drift in depression prevalence disorder using the EAPC of the prevalence of depression disorder between 1990 to 2019 with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (95% CI) across the GCC countries.

**Methods.** Prevalence of depression disorder data for the GCC countries were downloaded from "Our World in Data" <https://ourworldindata.org/mental-health#depression>. We computed the drift of depression over 30 years between the 6 GCC countries using the statistical software R.