

ABSTRACT

Profile of two Child Guidance Clinics looking at referral patterns, family characteristics and diagnoses.

Yvonne Bailey-Davidson

A retrospective study was conducted which comprised of 212 patients who attended the Comprehensive Health Center Child Guidance Clinic and 107 who attended the University of the West Indies Child Guidance Clinic.

Both clinics were similar in most areas. The mean age was 10.5 ± 3 with 48.3% in the age group 11-15 years. 62.4% of the patients were male and 87.1% were from the Kingston Metropolitan area. 37.5% of the patients were attending Primary schools. 20.4% of the patients were from two-parent families. The most common diagnosis was conduct disorder (32.3%). The most common presenting complaints were stealing (36.4%), learning problems (32.6%) and aggressive behaviour (26.6%). Psychotherapy was the favored mode of therapy. The attrition rate was greater than 70%.

One major difference between the clinics was that there were more referrals (31.1% vs 9.3%) from family members and less referrals (25.0 vs 44.9%) from health professionals at the Comprehensive Clinic in comparison to the University Clinic.

Another difference was that some findings at the Comprehensive Clinic were statistically significant while similar findings at the University Clinic were not. There was a significantly higher percentage of patients receiving individual (61.8% vs 39.3%), group psychotherapy (21.8% vs 11.2%) as well as laboratory investigations (8.5% vs 2.8%) at the Comprehensive Clinic and referrals to other agencies (15.0% vs 6.6%) at the University Clinic. There was a higher prevalence (10.4% vs 0%) of sexual abuse at the Comprehensive Clinic.

These findings of high attrition rates and high percentage of conduct disorder indicate the important need for a major study of the Child Guidance Clinics in the island looking at clinic utilization, especially at outcome of patients diagnosed with conduct disorder and the factors affecting attrition from the clinics.

It is recommended that a community survey assessing prevalence rates of psychiatric disorders in children should be done to give a picture of the mental health needs of the children in Jamaica.