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MENTAL HEALTH CARE PATHWAYS

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Introduction: The term, care pathway, has been used to describe multidisciplinary/ multi-agency outline of anticipated care, placed in an appropriate timeframe, to help a patient with a specific condition or set of symptoms move progressively through a clinical experience to positive outcomes. In practice, a multitude of disparate projects have produced outputs ranging from pages of interconnected boxes and arrows with rather basic entries to thick and indigestible wads of paper. Certainly the idea of a 'mental health care pathway' accessible and used by the general public, service users, carers, primary and secondary care has seemed overwhelmingly complex and unworkable.

Aims & objectives: To make relevant service and clinical information available when and where in a person's progress or a clinician treatment path it was needed.

Method: Website hyperlinks allow linkage within websites and to other websites with relevant information (e.g. ICD10, NICE guidelines, and Patient information leaflets). A development prototype funded by the UK NHS has been established to form the basis for a website to be launched in mid-2011 (www.mentalhealth.southcentral.nhs.uk)

Results: The prototype contains links to evidence-based information on maintaining mental health and on 'coping with problems'. Service Pathways describe detail of processes occurring in mental health care. Diagnostic care pathways start as broad categories [Kingdon et al, 2010] with links to diagnosis, medication (e.g. connects to the National Formulary) and psychological management sites.

Conclusions: Web technology allows information about mental health care pathways to be accessed more systematically and readily and has application internationally.