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Quality Assurance in German Mental Healthcare

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Introduction

One of the priorities in the German mental healthcare system pertains to the development and implementation of evidence-based quality assurance initiatives with the goal to measure quality and optimize the structures, processes and outcomes of mental healthcare services.

Objectives

To optimize the quality of mental healthcare by developing quality assurance tools including clinical practice guidelines and quality indicators.

Aims

To describe quality assurance initiatives in German mental healthcare.

Methods

Review of quality assurance initiatives and their current status.

Results

In national and regional initiatives, evidence- and consensus-based clinical practice guidelines and quality indicators are being developed. As examples, the cross-sectoral quality indicators of the German Association for Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics (DGPPN) and the update process of the German clinical practice and disease management guideline on schizophrenia will be described. A discussion of the critical issues in psychiatric quality indicator and guideline development and implementation will be included.

Conclusions

Evidence- and consensus-based approaches are crucial to the development of relevant and valid instruments for quality assurance. One of the main challenges is the implementation of clinical practice guidelines and their evaluation by means of quality indicators as well as the establishment of a common framework of standardized quality indicators that address relevant quality aspects in mental healthcare.