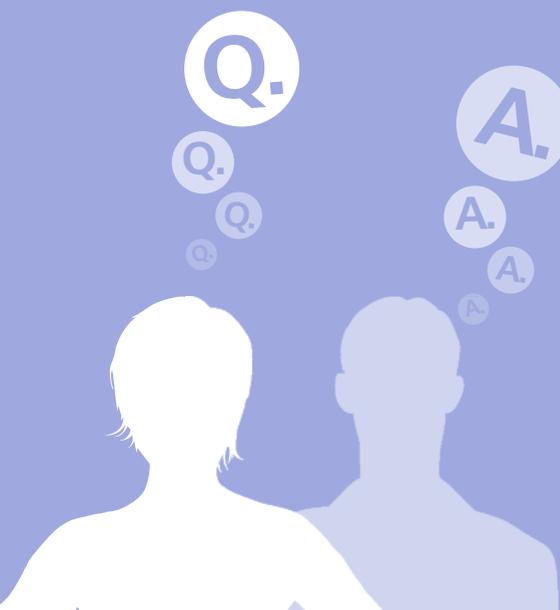




A patient's guide to the

Clinical Health Psychology Service



This information leaflet aims to help answer some of the questions you might have about why you have been referred to the Clinical Health Psychology Department and how we might be able to help you.

What is a clinical health psychologist?

Clinical health psychologists work with people with physical health problems to support them in adjusting to and coping with their illness or injury, reducing the impact of the illness/injury on their lives and improving their quality of life. Clinical health psychologists are not medical doctors and do not prescribe medication.

What type of difficulties do you treat?

We work with psychological difficulties associated with health problems or injury, including but not limited to the following:

- Difficulty adjusting to a medical condition, injury or chronic pain
- Depression and feelings of loss
- Anxiety and avoidance
- Family and/or relationship difficulties
- Difficulty putting into place pain management strategies

Why have I been referred to this service?

You have been referred to the Clinical Health Psychology Department because a healthcare professional working with you feels that you may benefit from psychological support. Sometimes patients think that a referral to psychology means that the problem “is all in their head”. This is not the case. Although medications and other treatments can be helpful, the benefits are often increased with psychological intervention. Thinking about other ways to manage your pain or cope with your condition could therefore be of benefit to you.

Can I request to see a male or female psychologist?

If there is a particular reason why you would feel more comfortable seeing either a male or a female psychologist, please let us know in advance and we will try to accommodate your request.

What will happen at my first appointment?

Your first meeting with one of the psychologists will be an assessment appointment. The aim of an assessment is to establish what the problem is and how the psychologist might be able to help you. The psychologist will ask you a number of questions to find out more about the problem, its history and development. They will also ask you questions about other areas in your life, including your family, work and social support. This assessment may stretch to two appointments where necessary. The assessment appointment can also be a useful space for you to consider

whether it is the right time for you to start psychological therapy. Sometimes an assessment and practical advice is all that is needed for the person to feel that they can manage better.

At the end of the assessment the psychologist will discuss with you their recommendations. There are three potential outcomes. Together you may agree that ongoing psychological therapy for a particular problem is the best way forward. If this is the case, the psychologist will agree a therapy contract with you about the number and frequency of psychology sessions and when they will take place. They may try to arrange a regular time and day for sessions. Alternatively, the psychologist may recommend an alternative form of support for you or together you may decide that it is not the best time for psychological work.

How long do sessions last?

Our appointments generally last 50 minutes. However, if you have particular requirements for shorter sessions we will try wherever possible to accommodate this.

How many sessions will I need?

The length of therapy will differ depending on the person and the problem. We generally offer short-term, focused psychological therapy for up to 20 sessions, although you may require fewer or more sessions than this. The effectiveness of any intervention is regularly reviewed so that both you and your psychologist have a clear idea of your progress.

Can I bring someone along to my appointments?

We generally see people on their own for psychological therapy. You are welcome to bring a family member or friend to wait in our seating area during your appointment. If the difficulty you have identified directly involves a partner, family member or friend, your psychologist may offer one or more joint sessions with that person.

Are my sessions confidential?

The psychologist will take notes during the assessment and any subsequent sessions. These notes are confidential and are kept securely within the department. They are not shown to other professionals. It is standard practice for the psychologist to write back to the professional who originally referred you, with a summary of the assessment and a description of the agreed treatment plan. A copy of this report is usually sent to you, your General Practitioner and, where appropriate, to other medical professionals within the hospital who are involved in your care. If your psychologist is concerned that you or somebody else you have discussed may be at significant risk of harm, they may need to share this information but they would always try to discuss this with you first.

Is the department wheelchair accessible?

Yes. There is a ramp leading to the entrance of the department and our therapy rooms can accommodate wheelchairs and other mobility aids. Patients are encouraged to use a combination of sitting, standing and moving around during appointments, if needed, to manage their physical discomfort.

What happens if I can't make an appointment?

If you are not able to make the appointment time offered, please contact us as soon as possible and we will try to find an alternative mutually convenient time. Please telephone us if you are running late. If you are likely to be more than 15 minutes late, it may be best for you to rearrange your appointment.

Any further questions?

Please do not hesitate to contact the Psychology Department if you have any other questions about your appointment.

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