

PULSAR Newsletter

MAY 2020

Welcome to the final PULSAR Newsletter

This newsletter is for everyone who was involved in PULSAR including mental health service staff, GPs and other interested people. Since the first one in July 2016, our newsletters have been our way of keeping you in touch with the project and its results. You can read about the PULSAR results and publications below. Despite this being our final newsletter, the PULSAR website remains as an important source of information and project outcomes pulsarrecovery.org.au.

A huge thank you to everyone who has been a part of this project!

What is recovery-oriented practice and the PULSAR project?

Recovery-oriented practice (ROP) involves supporting people to build and maintain a meaningful life and personal identity regardless of their ongoing symptoms of a mental illness. The Principles Unite Local Services Assisting Recovery (PULSAR) project encompasses the delivery and evaluation of a training intervention in ROP for General Practitioners (Primary Care) and Specialist Mental Health Service workers (Secondary Care) in Melbourne, Victoria. We now refer to this intervention as "REFOCUS-PULSAR" because, although it was developed for the PULSAR project, it was adapted for the Australian context from the original work of REFOCUS in the UK.

pulsarrecovery.org.au

PULSAR Secondary care study results are published and now open access!

Published in January 2019 in *The Lancet Psychiatry*, a high impact international psychiatry journal, readers can access the paper at [doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(18\)30429-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30429-2)

Following an extremely rigorous 6-month peer and editorial review process, findings from the PULSAR project were published in *The Lancet Psychiatry* in January 2019. The findings showed that delivering the REFOCUS-PULSAR training intervention to staff in recovery-oriented practice (ROP) can improve self-rated recovery outcomes for consumers. The intervention had a small but significant effect towards improving consumers' self-rated recovery based on the Questionnaire about the Process of Recovery (QPR), the primary outcome measure. This is the only study internationally to date to demonstrate the impact of this staff training on consumer-rated recovery outcomes. The findings were supported by a positive commentary published in the same *Lancet* issue and a blog post on the Mental Elf, which reached thousands on Twitter (79,000 followers) nationalelfservice.net/mental-health/refocus-pulsar-recovery-training-in-specialist-mental-health-care/.

The *Lancet Psychiatry* is a highly prestigious journal which has an impact factor of 18.329 and is ranked fourth out of all journals in psychiatry. This means that the findings from PULSAR, which are now freely available through open access, are likely to have significant world-wide impact. We hope that the results of this study will encourage mental health service providers to adapt this form of training in order to increase the integration of recovery-oriented care across whole organisations.

PULSAR Secondary Care Project Status

18 SITES

942 SURVEYS RECEIVED FROM CONSUMERS

273 INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH CONSUMERS

22 FOLLOW UP INTERVIEWS

21 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH SECONDARY CARE CONSUMERS

11 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH STAFF

A further paper based on the qualitative interviews is being prepared, which we hope will be published during 2020.

The PULSAR secondary care training manual is also now available at monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/1452410/PULSAR-Secondary_Care_Manual-FINAL.pdf

FURTHER DISSEMINATION UPDATES

Implementing our research findings with REFOCUS-PULSAR training sessions

Positive feedback for training at LAMPS hospitals

In 2018 Southern Synergy successfully applied to the South East Education and Training Cluster, LAMPS (Latrobe Regional Hospital Mental Health Services, Alfred Psychiatry, Monash Health, Peninsula Health Psychiatric Services, Southern Synergy) for funding to provide training in the REFOCUS-PULSAR Recovery program to all cluster agencies, including ward and community-based.

The trainings, which were delivered through three two-day workshops between September to November 2019, were attended by a total of 35 people across the LAMPS cluster. We received very positive feedback about the workshops, with mean satisfaction scores ranging from 8.4–9.4 out of 10. In addition, confidence in knowledge and skills scores increased by 2.3–2.4 points out of 10.

Qualitative feedback indicated that participants gained important knowledge and skills and felt inspired to apply them in their workplace, e.g., to “spend more time with my clients goals setting/learning about them”; “take note of my language”; “use recovery language” “embed the languages within team discussion”; “use coaching techniques to formulate treatment and recovery plans”.



PULSAR Primary Care Study

We have prepared a final manuscript of a paper describing this study's findings, and we are aiming to submit to a journal in the first half of 2020. The primary care study evaluated the results of the REFOCUS-PULSAR recovery-oriented training intervention for GPs. Cross-sectional surveys were collected from the patients of participating GPs pre and post intervention (different patients were sampled pre-and post). Results indicated small improvements in the primary outcome, the QPR, and two secondary outcome measures assessing mental well-being and psychological distress. These exploratory findings are promising, suggesting better patient outcomes after extending recovery-oriented practice training to GPs under ‘real-world’ conditions. Supporting this, in qualitative interviews GPs described ROP patient-doctor relationship and inspired different thinking and conversations, particularly with longstanding patients. This suggests there is scope for the further development of a recovery oriented approach within the context of general practice.

The PULSAR primary care training manual is also now freely available at monash.edu/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1797204/Pulsar-

PULSAR Primary Care Study Summary

30 GPs

16 CLINICS

23 GPs TRAINED IN RECOVERY-ORIENTED PRACTICE

235 SURVEYS RECEIVED FROM PATIENTS

9 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH GPs AND PRACTICE STAFF

10 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH GENERAL PRACTICE PATIENTS

PULSAR Process Evaluation

REFOCUS-PULSAR was characterised as a complex intervention implemented in diverse, multifaceted and sometimes difficult clinical contexts. Implementing complex trials in highly diverse and changing health care organisations presents many challenges. To estimate the impact of those contexts and how they interacted with the trial and its outcomes, we used a process evaluation approach throughout and after the implementation. The process evaluation paralleled the two-year, stepped wedge training intervention of the main study. We developed an indicator,

called Expectancy to Change (ETC) that sought to differentiate among the different contexts and their interactions with the study. The aim of the subproject was to explore if this variable could provide an estimate of the impact of the context and other factors on trial processes and outcomes at the different sites. The ETC was grounded in the Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services (PARiHS) framework. We derived three subvariables (evidence, facilitation and context) from PARiHS and collected both qualitative and quantitative data during the

entire study to track local differences in ETC and effects at each implementation site. We found that this variable could usefully assess salient, contextual differences at the 14 study sites. Our next step, now that the main study is completed and findings published in the Lancet article reported in this newsletter, is to see if the ETC variable or its components are associated with trial outcomes. We plan to complete that analysis in the first half of 2020 and publish our findings.

FURTHER DISSEMINATION UPDATES

PULSAR sub-study on the cross-cultural relevance of the Questionnaire on the Process of Recovery (the QPR)



This study, which was undertaken as part of a University of Melbourne Masters of Public Health program, investigated the relevance of the Questionnaire about the Process of Recovery (QPR) within culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Australia. Common themes reported by GPs and patients included: the QPR has the potential to be an effective tool for identifying mental health needs in CALD communities.

The QPR was viewed useful and relevant by most patients, and GPs noted that the QPR had a variety of potential uses: setting goals for recovery, facilitating referrals, and being used as a screening tool for mental health problems where language barriers exist. We submitted a manuscript describing the findings in detail to the International Journal of Mental Health Systems in 2019; while it was not accepted for publication, we received some promising

feedback that the article was “well written and interesting.” We are making revisions to submit the article to another journal this year. We wrote a newsletter about the study and this was sent to all participants in February 2018 in both English and their own language (either Burmese and Farsi). The newsletters are available at monash.edu/medicine/scs/psychiatry/research/southern-synergy/health-services/pulsar.

Community Treatment Order (CTO) Sub-study

This qualitative study explored how CTOs impact the ways consumers are supported in their recovery and how well-suited PULSAR ROP is in the context of CTOs. Some key themes from consumer interviews included: lacking choice and control when being on a CTO, an emphasis on medication, fear of the threat of hospitalisation, an absence of ROP, and staying supported. Staff working in services that use CTOs supported ROP, but experienced challenges to its implementation. For example, a lack of institutional-buy in, and that giving patients the freedom to make

their own choices, despite the risks, was challenging on a CTO. Our findings suggest there is value in providing ROP training within services that use CTOs, but highlight that systematic change is required to ensure the uptake of ROP.

This sub-study was published in the International Journal of Law and Psychiatry in 2019. Readers can access this paper at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/31122627





A Formal Submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

The PULSAR team, in a formal submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System recommended that the Victorian government invest in recovery-oriented practice training using the now evidence based PULSAR training. We also recommend that the government invest in high quality research in Victoria that has the potential for such high impact and translation into practice, such as PULSAR.

See our submission here:
s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.vic-rcvmhs.files/8615/7059/5382/PULSAR.pdf

Links

PULSAR primary care training manual

monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1797204/Pulsar-Manual_v3.pdf

PULSAR secondary care training manual

monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/1452410/PULSAR-Secondary_Care_Manual-FINAL.pdf

PULSAR primary care protocol

bmcp psychiatry.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12888-016-1153-6

PULSAR secondary care protocol

link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12888-017-1321-3

PULSAR secondary care study results published in The Lancet Psychiatry

[doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(18\)30429-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30429-2)

Commentary on the PULSAR secondary care study results:

Rogers, E. S. (2019). Recovery-oriented practices need innovative research. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 6(2), 82–83.
[doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(18\)30476-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30476-0)

The Mental Elf Blog Post – Hope for recovery

nationalelfservice.net/mental-health/refocus-pulsar-recovery-training-in-specialist-mental-health-care/

PULSAR Community Treatment Order sub-study

ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/31122627

PULSAR submission to Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.vic-rcvmhs.files/8615/7059/5382/PULSAR.pdf

PULSAR newsletters

monash.edu/medicine/scs/research/southern-synergy/health-services/pulsar

Contact PULSAR

Please contact us with feedback or any questions:

Phone (03) 9902 9695

Email pulsar.admin@monash.edu

pulsarrecovery.org.au