

# Acute Psychiatric Presentations during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Development of The Inniscarrig Centre Assessment Hub (ICAH) in the Cork Mental Health Services

Dr Sarah McEvaddy<sup>1</sup>, Ms. Marie Cotter<sup>2</sup>, Dr Mary Wall<sup>3</sup>, Dr Attiya Suhail<sup>4</sup>

1. Medical Intern, Mallow General Hospital, Co. Cork, 2. Advanced Nurse Practitioner, North Lee Mental Health Services, 3. Senior Psychiatry Registrar, Home Based Treatment Team, South Lee Mental Health Services, 4. Consultant General Adult Psychiatrist, South Lee Mental Health Services.

## Background

Disease pandemics have a significant effect on the mental well-being of the population. Countries worldwide have seen an increase in depression and anxiety amongst the general public as a result of Covid-19.

The Inniscarrig Centre Assessment Hub (ICAH) was developed in Cork to assess and manage acute mental health presentations during the Covid-19 pandemic and reduce attendance at emergency departments (EDs) and acute mental health units (AMHU). Reducing attendance at acute healthcare facilities is vital to reduce disease transmission and avoid unnecessary pressure on medical resources.

## Aims and Objectives

We aim to describe the development of the ICAH, which provides acute mental health assessments during the Covid-19 pandemic. We aim to describe the referrals to the ICAH and compare the presentations seen in the ICAH to acute presentations prior to Covid-19. We hypothesized that ICAH has been increasingly utilized with progression of the pandemic.

## Methods

This is a retrospective descriptive study. Ethical approval was obtained from Cork Research and Ethics Committee. Our description of the development of the ICAH was informed by the relevant Standard Operating Procedures with input from Consultant and Nursing colleagues actively involved in setting up and managing this service.

Databases detailing all acute presentations to our North and South Lee Mental Health Services are routinely maintained. Data for the 9-month period of April 2020 until December 2020 was extracted from each database, comprising demographics, location of assessment, referral agent, principal presentation, outcome and status on admission if applicable. Descriptive and correlation analysis were performed using SPSS.

## Results

The ICAH provides urgent mental health assessment and treatment in a community setting within 24-hours. It is staffed by a nurse lead, clinical nurse specialists, allied healthcare professionals, a non-consultant hospital doctor and a supervising consultant psychiatrist. The service operates 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. Referrals are accepted from general practitioners(GPs), EDs, AMHUs, community mental health teams(CMHTs) and home-based crisis teams(HBCTs).

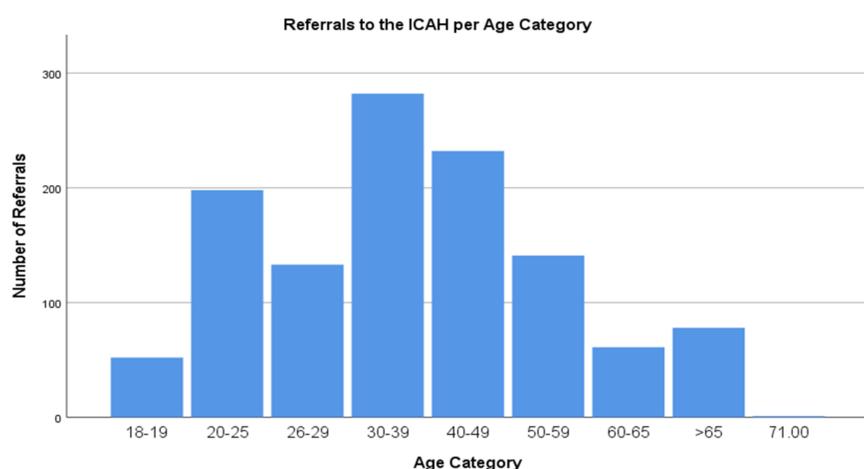


Figure 1 illustrates the number of referrals to ICAH per age category

## Results

Of the 1170 referrals made to the ICAH from 08/04/2020 to 21/12/2020, 9.7%(n=114) were not accepted while 8.2%(n=82) declined or did not attend. The mean age was 39.2 years +/-SD 15.2.and 51%(n=600) were female. GPs referred 55.8%(n=650) with 27.6%(n=322) from ED. Suicidal ideation was the most common presentation (37.6%, n=439), followed by low mood (22.8%, n=266) and psychosis(13%, n=152).

Of the 979 assessments, 55%(n=539) were referred to CMHTs and 12%(n=113) were admitted. Of those assessed in ED/AMHU during this time, 40%(n=721) required CMHT referral and 33% (n=605) were admitted. This is in comparison to 47% (n=906) and 26%(n=572) respectively for this period in 2019.

Rising national Covid-19 total cases and deaths were weakly associated with increased referrals,  $r_s = .256$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , and  $r_s = .250$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .

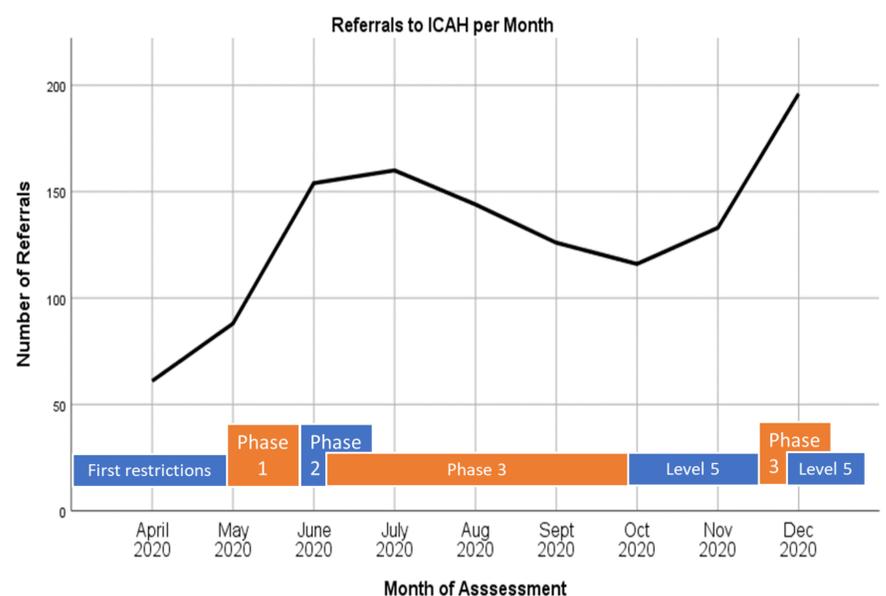


Figure 2 illustrates the number of referrals to ICAH per month and highlights the level of covid-19 restrictions at the time

No. of Presentations	08/04/19 – 31/12/19	08/04/20 – 31/12/20
North Lee	934	415
South Lee	1,080	986
The Hub	n/a	969 (1,179 referrals)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,014</b>	<b>2,370</b>

Table 1 illustrates the changes in presentation numbers during the pandemic compared to the same period in 2019.

## Limitations

Of note, databases were not available for North and West Cork Mental Health Services, however presentations from these catchment areas comprised 4.3%(n=88) of presentations in this period 2019, and 9.8% (n=233) presentations/referrals for this period in 2020, including 14% (n=169) of referrals to the ICAH.

## Conclusions

The ICAH is a new model of service provision that has successfully reduced acute presentations to emergency departments and acute mental health units during Covid-19. The proportion of presentations requiring secondary care and admission is largely unchanged. The number of acute mental health presentations to the ICAH increased as the pandemic progresses. This may indicate an increase in mental illness and psychological distress in the context of Covid-19 amongst the Cork population.