Mental Health in Primary Care
What do Health Professionals believe is the best Model of Care?

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Objectives
To examine the detection and management of mental health problems by General Practitioners (GPs) in a defined area in Ireland, to compare their management and views on the mental health services with those of mental health professionals and to develop a comprehensive model of care for management of mental health problems in an Irish community.

Methods
This study has used quantitative survey data obtained by postal questionnaires and qualitative data from focus groups to obtain information on GPs’ detection and management of mental health problems in primary care, their use of specialist mental health services and their views on what will improve management of mental health problems in primary care. Simultaneously quantitative and qualitative data was gathered from Mental Health Practitioners (MHPs) who work in CMHTs in the GPs area. The GPs and MHPs were from an urban and rural area of Ireland, serving a population of 232,000.

Results

Response rate and percentage of mental health problems identified and referred to specialist services are similar to other Irish studies. Both GPs and MHPs believed a number of people were being inappropriately referred to Secondary Care, because of lack of resources in Primary Care. The focus groups confirmed that both GPs and MHPs believed too many people with anxiety and depression were referred to Secondary care, because of lack of resources in Primary Care.

Discussion

What prevents GPs from referring to a specialist service.

- Treatment offered may not be appropriate
- Specialist service not accepting referrals
- Information about the service
- No follow up plan

Focus groups identified stigma of mental health services as the main reason for patients not attending. Missing access to primary care. We would reduce this.

References
