

How could we help? Psychiatric ward library opens its doors as a response to COVID-19.

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Introduction

COVID-19 brought everything to a halt in Ireland. The main branch of Adult Mental Health Service, Cork Library is based in an acute psychiatric unit in Mercy University Hospital, Cork. While the majority of public and health libraries in Ireland were forced to close their doors and many librarians were seconded to Public Health delegated to assist with mostly contact tracing, our library stayed open, tried to respond to as many queries as possible while trying to **re-imagine what could be offered via our premises**.

Initial steps

Library space was immediately inspected for compliance with COVID-19 **infection control guidelines** and, as we were able to put necessary measures in place, it was decided to open the library for use other than study/information retrieval during the crises.

Supportive factors

- Introducing all of these measures was only possible due **flexibility and support given to us by the infection control and IT teams**.
- Library room was now used more than ever and online booking system, which incidentally had been put in place a year before the pandemic to accommodate staff from remote centres to be able to book a meeting space, became very useful.
- **Nursing management co-operation** was instrumental in assisting the library to realise its potential to help while ensuring library services continued using other spaces.
- Printed materials in the library have always been kept in **closed shelves** (typical glass door cabinets of older medical library era – for once it was useful!) and this meant that materials were protected while the room was used by staff and service users for other purposes.

What could we offer?

1

While any eating and/or drinking hot beverages was discouraged in the library before COVID-19, we now **opened the library space up for staff members' lunches and tea breaks**, as the social distancing measures meant that only very limited number of staff were allowed to use the usual staff tea room at any given time. Opening the library space to allow the staff to sit down and eat their meal there was very well received.

2

Before COVID-19 the radiology results were accessed via Emergency Department's (ED) computers, so to limit the footfall to the ED we organised **radiology results to be accessible from the library** (limited to two PCs).

3

Mental Health Commission (MHC) tribunals for all involuntary patients were previously held in one of the meeting rooms, but due to social distancing and the need for Tribunal members not to travel within the country, the **library offered its' space to book and hold initially teleconference and later also online MHC tribunals**.

4

Regular multidisciplinary team (MDT) meetings which were usually held in consultants' offices were now also held in the library due to lack of necessary space in the offices. This meant patient care could continue with minimal disruption.

5

All new staff inductions as well as on-going educational sessions, journal clubs, and case presentations were previously held in the library premises, but as we did not have enough space, **educational activities now moved to online platforms and were hosted by the library**.



Outcomes

Opening the library in such way during COVID-19 crises resulted in:

- ✓ Ward being able to run its services with as little disruption as possible
- ✓ MDT staff could continue their educational development
- ✓ Nursing and medical staff benefitted from extra space where to take their breaks
- ✓ Emergency Department saw minimal footfall from our staff
- ✓ All online interventions we introduced are now here to stay