Forensic mental health nursing
The interaction between staff and schizophrenic inpatients

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Abstract
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Background
The number of forensic mental health patients in Denmark is increasing at a rate of 11% per year. Forensic psychiatric patients occupy 20% of all psychiatric beds, and of the total number of forensic mental health patients, 75% are diagnosed with schizophrenia. For this group of inpatients everyday care is a part of the current psychiatric treatment offered on the forensic mental health wards. However, we know very little about the characteristics of staff care and the significance this has for the forensic mental health inpatients. Knowledge about everyday care in relation to the interaction between staff and patients is therefore necessary in order to further evaluate and develop clinical nursing practice.

Aim
The aim of the study is to examine everyday care as it is carried out on the forensic mental health ward. The objective is to describe and analyze the care provided by mental health staff as they interact with schizophrenic forensic mental health inpatients. A further objective is to examine the staff’s and patients’ experiences of everyday care, and what significance the care has for the patients.

Materials and Methodology
Symbolic Interactionism is employed as the principal methodological framework for the study. Taking everyday life as the starting point, the focus is on the underlying significance of actual communication and interaction as it occurs in daily nursing practice. For this purpose, explorative ethnographic fieldwork is undertaken, in the form of observations and interviews over a 12 month period. The study consists of three stages: In Stage I descriptive participant observations are carried out. In Stage two participant observations are guided by the previous analysis at stage one. Stage three involves open interviews and interviews based on the two previous stages. The study includes a maximum of 16 schizophrenic, forensic mental health inpatients over the age of 18 of Danish ethnic origin, together with the forensic mental health staff working on the same ward(s).

Data analysis
Data is collected by participant observations and interviews and transcribed into text, which is then analyzed using domain, taxonomic and content analysis. This means that the text is analyzed in relation to the terms and underlying meaning that the text constitutes as a whole. ‘Meaning’ is defined as the meaning expressed by the participants collectively throughout the complete data collection. The purpose of this is to find and sort semantic relations from within everyday care and the interaction between patients and forensic mental health staff in relation to the overall aim of the study. Thereby the study seeks to provide a foundation for further development and evaluation of existing practice.

Timetable
The study begins in September 2008 and the final report is expected at the beginning of September 2011.

Ethics
The study has been reported to, and approved by, the Danish Data Protection Agency and The Danish National Committee on Biomedical Research Ethics, Region of Southern Denmark.

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Research Supervisors
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