

Patient & Staff Story

St Ann's Hospital and the
Early Intervention Service

Monica

Monica (not her real name) is a 29 year old woman who was diagnosed with psychosis and bipolar disorder in January 2016. Monica said there is a family history of mental illness, her mother suffers with alcohol misuse, her father with depression, her maternal grandfather with depression and alcohol misuse and her maternal aunt with bipolar disorder, but this was the first time that Monica herself had experienced this.

Before her illness Monica was a successful accounts manager who travelled the country and lived in a shared house. She now feels she has nothing following her illness and the ten months since her diagnosis and the time she spent in hospital.

Monica was taking antidepressant medication prescribed by her GP. But she knew that she was not feeling well. Having previously taken illegal drugs she explained she felt 'high'. She contacted her GP who suggested that she increase her dosage of her antidepressants, however Monica stopped taking them instead. It is not known how long after stopping her medication, but this led to her feeling even more unwell and feeling very 'high', so she called an ambulance, as she knew that she needed help.

Monica was admitted to Seaview Ward St Ann's Hospital, following admission from Poole Hospital in January 2016, and was then transferred to Chine Ward two days later.

Monica felt that Chine ward did not manage her illness well as she felt that she was not getting better.

Monica felt that she was being given the wrong medication to help her and that they could not get her medication right. She did not sleep for many nights as she did not feel safe, this was mainly due to the way her illness made her feel, and also other patients, who she found to be noisy, aggressive and intimidating. The lack of sleep led Monica to become aggressive and violent to both staff and patients. She needed to be restrained and have rapid tranquilization on many occasions and Monica said that as a previous rape victim earlier in her life, being held down made her feel even worse. This was known to staff at the time of her admission.

Monica continued to be violent, and at the time of her hospital admission there was no provision for female intensive therapy beds at St Ann's Hospital, so Monica was transferred to a hospital in London for further treatment. Monica stated that the move to London made her feel worse and that her medication continued to not work effectively, she thought that she was in a hotel but was being restrained by someone. She tried to escape frequently. She felt like she was in prison and was only allowed half an hour's break each day, Monica also felt the hospital was dirty.

After a month in London Monica was discharged back to her parents' home in New Milton. Unfortunately, Monica quickly became unwell again and was readmitted to St Ann's Hospital in May 2016. Monica continued to be violent and had to be restrained on numerous occasions. Her care team at St Ann's suggested that she have Electroconvulsive Therapy to try and help improve her behaviour/violent outbursts and to manage her illness. However, her parents felt that this was an archaic treatment and refused for her to have this. Monica was therefore transferred to a different London hospital in July 2016 for further treatment, as there was still no provision of female PICU beds in Dorset at that time.

Monica felt she was bullied and racially abused by other patients during her stay in the London Hospital, as she was one of the few white patients there. They took some time to get her medication under control, and during this time Monica suffered many side effects from the medication she was taking, and she also felt that this hospital was dirty as well. She felt isolated, as her friends could not visit and her family were not nearby for support.

After a month in London Monica was transferred back to St Ann's Hospital, again initially to Seaview Ward, but she was then transferred to Chine Ward, to stabilise her medication and to support her discharge into the community. Monica was discharged in October 2016 to the Early Intervention Service (EIS)

Monica feels that this admission was much better than her previous one, as the staff in the main were caring. Monica felt she was able to be involved in her treatment and care, was given more leave and had the support of her family and friends nearby.

Monica explained that staff on Chine ward, helped her to find a place to live and she was discharged to the YMCA in Bournemouth following completion of her inpatient stay.

Monica is now under the care of the Early Intervention Team (EIS) and says that their support is 'phenomenal' and that she cannot fault the care and support that she has been given by the team. Monica has a really good rapport with her support worker and is also under the care of a psychologist, which is enabling her to talk about her care at St Ann's and her previous sexual assault.

Monica is currently working part time but is aiming to return to work full time in the near future with the support from the Early Intervention Service.

Team Feedback

From EIS team

Monica will benefit from being able to tell her story and will feel listened to. If she feels that telling her story might help to change/inform future treatment for others then this would be a positive achievement for her.

From an objective standpoint Monica was very unwell for a sustained period of time and achieving the effective combination of medication was very difficult. However reading her personal account of her experiences and the consequences of these experiences highlights how we should all work together to improve care where possible and to also build on the positives.

Working with Monica since she was discharged from hospital she has consistently moved forward in her recovery through her own determination to rebuild her life. The team are really happy that she has managed to achieve so much in a relatively short space of time and look forward to continuing to work with her.

From Chine ward

As we did not have a female PICU Monica stayed on the ward longer than we have liked as we were aware of the consequences for sending her to an out of area PICU, which meant an unfamiliar environment, away from her friends and family, staff that did not know her and she did not know them, and we had little control over their choices of treatment.

Whilst Monica was out of area we stayed in contact with the PICU, with Monica, and Monica's family. The hospital in London appeared to have a lot of 'blanket' rules and patients were not allowed mobile phones so this limited Monica's contact with her family and friends. All visits had to take place off the ward as visitors were not allowed on the ward, meaning they needed to have staff escort, which affected the length of the visit.

For the new PICU at St Ann's Hospital we have made a lot of effort to treat patients in the least restrictive manner and have tried to avoid blanket rules - phones are not routinely removed - and if they need to be, the rationale for this is clearly documented and if necessary a care plan put in place. Family can also visit on the ward, unless there are significant concerns.

We agree with Monica with regards the out of area placements, and on her first admission there we made the decision to get her back to St Ann's as soon as possible as the environment was in our view, not conducive to her recovery.

As we did not have PICU provision locally to support Monica, her family were supported financially by the Trust with reimbursing travel cost and expenses thus ensuring that they were able to visit their daughter regularly when she was in London.