Authors' objectives
To examine the evidence for the effectiveness and efficiency of different service delivery models.

Searching
The following databases were searched: MEDLINE from 1972 to June 1997; EMBASE from 1980 to 1997; PsycLIT from 1972 to June 1997; Sociofile from 1974 to June 1997; the Cochrane Library (Issue 3, 1997); SIGLE (via Blaiseline On-line); and Mental Health Abstracts (via DIALOG On-line). The search terms were provided. Government departments, professional organisations, relevant agencies, and key researchers and authors were also contacted for information.

Study selection
Study designs of evaluations included in the review
All studies which provided information on short-, medium- or long-term outcomes of interventions or regimes, in services for women assessed as needing psychiatric care under secure conditions, were initially included. The authors then intended to apply stricter criteria, but no papers met this second set of criteria.

The length of follow-up was not reported, even though the data extraction forms suggested that this information was collected.

Specific interventions included in the review
Interventions or regimes in services for women assessed as needing psychiatric care under secure conditions.

Participants included in the review
Women admitted for secure psychiatric care.

Outcomes assessed in the review
A 'subjective rating' of progress, as defined by the authors of the study concerned, was made. This was based on subsequent psychiatric condition, behaviour in and out of hospital or prison, work record, further court appearances, and hospital readmission.

How were decisions on the relevance of primary studies made?
Judgements about inclusion were made by two independent reviewers. Any disagreements were to be resolved by discussion between the assessors, and with a third member of the team if necessary; however, this did not prove necessary.

Assessment of study quality
The authors do not state that they assessed validity.

Data extraction
The authors do not state how the data were extracted for the review, or how many of the authors performed the data extraction. The data were retrieved from case records of hospitals and prisons, and then extracted onto pre-designed data extraction forms.

Methods of synthesis
How were the studies combined?
Since only one relevant study was found, this was not applicable.

How were differences between studies investigated?
Since only one relevant study was found, this was not applicable.

Results of the review
One cohort study, comprising 33 participants, was included.

Of the 33 women included, 32 women were followed-up (one escaped). Of these, 18 were given an outcome rating of ‘poor’ and 14 one of ‘good’. The group of woman admitted from other psychiatric hospitals, particularly those admitted following violence in hospital, tended to have poorer outcomes than those admitted from the courts. The outcome was not related to the length of stay.

Authors’ conclusions
Only one study was identified which examined the effectiveness of psychiatric care. This study found a poorer outcome amongst women admitted from psychiatric hospitals than amongst those admitted from the courts.

CRD commentary
This abstract focused only on the 'effectiveness of psychiatric care' section of a larger review entitled 'Women and secure psychiatric services: a literature review'. This section addressed a well-defined research question. The literature search was very thorough, but only one study was found. Appropriate inclusion and exclusion criteria were reported. The study was summarised appropriately.

Some details of the individual study were included, although it would have been useful to have included information about the age of the participants and the length of follow-up. The validity of the included study was not assessed.

The authors presented a thorough review, but the conclusions that can be drawn from it are limited, due to the fact that only one relevant study was found.

The design of the included study was not clearly described. The characteristics of the women admitted from psychiatric hospitals were likely to be different from those admitted from the courts. Thus, the study result should not be used to evaluate the relative effect of different service delivery models.

Implications of the review for practice and research
The authors stress that there is a key gap in the knowledge about the effects of different service models. They suggest the opportunity for developing and monitoring different service models should be taken and comparative evaluation studies carried out.

The authors note that Dolan and Coid (see Other Publications of Related Interest) did not find any outcome studies of treatment regimes provided in secure conditions that provided separate data on women. Dolan and Coid suggested 'there is a need for new research strategies which take a naturalistic approach by following large cohorts of patients through a number of statutory and voluntary treatment, with differing levels of security, within health, social and penal services'. The authors state that although they are referring to specific diagnostic groups, this suggestion is a reasonable one to apply more generally to women who experience the secure psychiatric services.

Bibliographic details

Original Paper URL
http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/CRD_Reports/crdreport14.pdf
Other publications of related interest

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Record Status
This is a critical abstract of a systematic review that meets the criteria for inclusion on DARE. Each critical abstract contains a brief summary of the review methods, results and conclusions followed by a detailed critical assessment on the reliability of the review and the conclusions drawn.