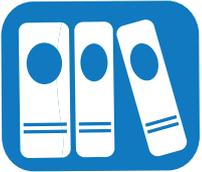


Eight ways to make the most of your psychiatry rotation



Mental health isn't just for psychiatrists. Almost half the population of both Australia and New Zealand are expected to experience mental health problems at some point in their life. Mental health plays a huge part in modern medicine and your psychiatry rotation can provide you with valuable and relevant experiences whichever career path you choose.



Psychiatry is an evidence based specialty. Reading up on the types of illnesses you will see can help you feel prepared; taking the time to review your notes and relevant texts can develop diagnostic skills, clinical knowledge and help you feel equipped for rounds. Considering the physical health of your patients provides valuable insight for diagnosis and care, it also demonstrates how psychiatry is a vital link with many other aspects of medicine.



Seek out previous experience. Psychiatry can be fascinating and rewarding, but it can also sometimes be daunting. Speak to someone who has already done a psychiatry rotation, find out about their experience and any pointers they can offer. Keep an open mind and allow yourself to form opinions based upon your experiences.



Look after yourself. Make sure you are familiar with emergency procedures and case notes prior to seeing patients. Always check with staff before seeing patients, there may be times when you need to work in pairs. It is important to take care of your emotional as well as physical wellbeing. Taking the opportunity to debrief after emotionally draining experiences will help you be better placed to help those in need.



Be part of the team. Take the time to get to know who the other players are, what they do and how your roles combine. The mental health team can offer valuable insights and lessons, and can also help to ensure you have a safe rotation and get the most out of the experience. It's also important to remember the contribution made by the families and carers of people with a mental illness.



Review. Check patient information before talking to them so that you can ask the most appropriate questions and verify the information given to you by staff to ensure consistency. As you gain in confidence, you will be able to assess a patient without knowing their full story (more often than not they will tell you anyway). You can then check your assessment against the notes and with other clinicians.



Ask questions and seek feedback. You don't have to wait until the end of the rotation to find out how you are progressing. Ask sufficient questions and pay attention to other students' queries to satisfy your knowledge gaps. Make the most of the time you have with members of the mental health team, registrars and consultants. Asking for feedback during your rotation shows initiative, interest and can help you find out what's going well and where you can improve.



Take it further. Join the RANZCP's Psychiatry Interest Forum (PIF) and stay in the loop with the activities and networking opportunities. As a member of the PIF you will receive a range of benefits including invitations to workshops, seminars, opportunities to attend conferences as well as advice from RANZCP Fellows on career paths in psychiatry. For more information, check out our website at www.ranzcp.org/pif

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Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics Australian Social Trends (2009). Oakley Browne, Wells & Scott (2006). The Student Doctor Network Family Medicine Interest Group—Making the most of each rotation. Australian Medical Students Association—Finding a Mentor. Australian Medical Students Association (2013)—Intern and Residents Guide. Ranesh Palan (2013) 'Getting through your first medical rotation'.