

Inspection visit to the psychiatric clinic of the University Tartu Hospital

Summary

On 28 April 2017, the advisers of the Chancellor of Justice inspected the acute department and the general psychiatric department of the psychiatric clinic of the University of Tartu Hospital Foundation. The last inspection of the clinic by the Chancellor of Justice was carried out on 10 April 2014. During the visit, the advisers of the Chancellor of Justice visited the rooms of the clinic with an expert, talked to the hospital staff and patients, and examined the documents on the implementation of involuntary emergency psychiatric care and restraining measures.

The acute department of the clinic has 35 beds. The acute department is divided into three parts: separate parts for women and men whose condition is more severe and the common part. During the visit, there were 29 patients in the acute department. There are two medical nurses on duty in each part of the acute department during the day and at night there is one nurse in both the women's and then men's parts and two nurses in the common part of the department. There are two caregivers in the women's and men's parts and one caregiver in the common part during the day and one caregiver in each part of the acute department at night. An activity instructor is on duty in the acute department on a daily basis.

There are 25 beds in the general psychiatric department of the clinic. There are four or five nurses and one caregiver on duty in the general psychiatric department during the day and three nurses and one caregiver in the evening and at night. There is an activity instructor on duty in the general psychiatric department five days a week, including at the weekend, if so scheduled.

It is worth recognising that the clinic has introduced an electronic medical history system that allows for documenting the patient's condition and the procedures carried out and to share the information between the medical staff. Those patients who wish can wear their own clothes. The clinic has separate rooms for meeting with visitors. In the activity rooms of the departments the patients can practice arts and handicraft with the assistance of an instructor. There is at all times a staff member of the clinic present in the room where a mechanically restrained patient is kept.

However, the safety of patients in the observation room where mechanically restrained patients may be accommodated at the same time as patients who need to be separated from others requires urgent attention. The latter should remain out of the sight of other patients at all times.

Video surveillance may be used for monitoring patients in the case of an urgent need. If also those patients whose condition does not call for it are subject to constant surveillance, their right to privacy is excessively being restricted. In such an event, the attention of the surveillance staff is also divided and some of the actual danger situations may not be prevented or solved.

Documentation on the application of restraining measures (restraining a person physically, mechanically or otherwise in a manner prescribed by law) must be clearly and exhaustively reflect the reasons for the application of the measure and the circumstances justifying the measure.