

## **Inspection visit to the psychiatric department of South-Estonian Hospital**

On 1 February 2020, advisers to the Chancellor of Justice made an unannounced inspection visit to the psychiatric department of the South-Estonian Hospital. The advisers to the Chancellor of Justice and a healthcare expert took a tour of the department's premises, talked to the department's staff and patients and examined the department's documents.

Psychiatric care services are provided in two units that are located on the fifth floor of the hospital and the department has total of 30 beds. On the day of the inspection visit, unit B had 13 patients and unit A had 7 patients. Of the staff who come into direct contact with the patients, two nurses and one caregiver were on call in unit B and one nurse and one caregiver were on call in unit A. One nurse and one caregiver are present in each unit at night. Psychiatrists are available in the department on working days (from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.). They do not work weekends and nights.

In comparison with the last inspection visit, it is commendable that the department has significantly increased different therapy options (family therapy, group therapy, etc.). For the purposes of organising therapy sessions and group activities, the department employs experts and has a well-furnished room. Individual sessions with psychologists also take place. There are more options available to the patients with respect to engaging in leisure activities under the instruction of an activity instructor.

The living conditions of the department have been made more comfortable and unit A has had repairs carried out. The walls of unit B (the intensive care unit) have been decorated with the patients' drawings, and houseplants and soft furniture have been added to the unit's common rooms (TV room). Based on patients' statements, the department's staff are attentive and amicable, the atmosphere is calm, and issues are resolved quickly. Patients are also satisfied with the food and available leisure activities as well as with the possibility of taking nature walks in the area surrounding the hospital.

The Chancellor of Justice emphasises that where medics prohibit the patients from freely leaving the hospital, the decision of applying involuntary treatment must be properly documented. If no such decision has been drawn up, there exists no legal basis for preventing the patient from leaving the hospital.

The patients must be better informed about video surveillance and its extent, and the use of video surveillance in the observation room must be justified with respect to each individual patient. Patients must be able to lock bathroom doors. The psychiatric department must install letterboxes which the patients can use to submit recommendations and complaints. The review of complaints must be performed in accordance with the hospital's established procedures.

To improve security, the hospital should consider providing staff with portable devices which can be used to call assistance.