Title: Being in a Secure Forensic Psychiatry Unit: Every Day is the Same, Killing Time or Making the Most of It

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Major Finding: Inpatients in a secure forensic psychiatric facility spent the majority of their time in personal care and leisure occupations, which they described as “passing time.”

Participants:
- Eight men from two wards of a specialist forensic psychiatric inpatient unit in Victoria, Australia
  - Age range: 24-48 years
  - Duration of mental illness: 12 months to 30 years
  - Diagnoses: 7 had a diagnosis of schizophrenia; 1 had a diagnosis of anxiety disorder
  - Duration of residence at facility: 2 to 24 months
  - Marital status: 6 were single; 1 was married; 1 was estranged from his wife; 2 had children

Method: Each participant filled in a time diary for two consecutive days. Five of the eight participants completed the OPHI-II. Field notes about the activities and routines of the inpatients and staff and the environment were recorded twice daily.

Analysis: Time use diaries were separated into categories and descriptive statistics were calculated for each category. Thematic analysis of interview and field note data was completed.

Findings:
- The men primarily spent their time engaging in passive leisure activities (talking, smoking, relaxing, watching television and videos) and sleep.
- The men perceived their engagement in activities as “passing the time” rather than as meaningful.
- The men viewed their environment as restraining their engagement in occupations (time constraints, limited material resources, lack of a quiet space).
- A few participants made the most of time and created challenges.

Conclusion: Understanding individuals’ unique occupational histories, interests, and skills is important for providing meaningful occupational opportunities in a forensic rehabilitation setting.

Implications for future research: Longitudinal outcomes research could be conducted to better understand the impact of occupational programming and the environment on the residents well-being. Staff interviews could further identify how occupational programming could be organized to provide more choice and control for the residents and to address their individual needs.

Evidence–based practice implications:
- A systematic use of tools in forensic settings might help staff to identify opportunities for occupational engagement that capitalize upon residents’ individual strengths and interests.
- Therapists in forensic settings should identify opportunities that will increase choice and control and variability with programming to enhance the daily occupations of residents. Current activities and groups should be critically examined for the extent to which they provide opportunities for choice and control.

Farnworth, L., Nikitin, L., & Fossey, E. (2004). Being in a secure forensic psychiatry unit: Every day is the same, killing time or making the most of it. British Journal of Occupational Therapy, 67(10), 1-9.