

EIGHT USEFUL TIPS

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR PSYCHIATRY ROTATION

01 Psychiatry plays a huge part in modern medicine

Almost half the population of both Australia and New Zealand expected to experience mental health problems at some point their life. Your psychiatry rotation can provide you with valuable and rewarding experiences, from seeing a patient regain function and health to gaining relevant communication skills when assisting people through distressing times.

03 Be involved & seek previous experience

On your first rotation, you will be generally placed in an acute inpatient ward assisting the psychiatrist with psychiatric interviews. You may also be involved in mental health tribunal hearings. It is important to be active and get involved in these opportunities. While rewarding, psychiatry may seem daunting at first, and it's helpful to speak with someone who already has done a psychiatry rotation to find out about their experience and tips they can offer.

05 Be part of the team

Take the time to get to know who the multi-disciplinary team 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.

07 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 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.

02 Get Prepared

As psychiatry is an evidence-based specialty, it can be helpful to read up on the common areas of knowledge around illnesses and medications to develop clinical knowledge so you feel equipped for rounds. Some suggested resources include: rapid recall books on psychiatry, RANZCP guidelines on different illnesses, and the Australian Medicines Handbook.

04 Look after yourself

Ensure you allow yourself regular time away from the workplace. Use leave for breaks, prioritize hobbies and physical activity. 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 well-being. Taking the opportunity to debrief after emotionally draining experiences will help you be better placed to help those in need.

06 Review

It may be difficult to write notes in the way that we've normally been taught as a patient may not be able to provide you with a psychiatric interview in a succinct and systematized way. 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).

08 Take it further

Join the RANZCP's Psychiatry Interest Forum (PIF) and stay in the loop with 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