

Psychiatric patients from general hospitals: pathways followed before consultation Pacientes psiquiátricos de hospitales generales: caminos recorridos antes de consultar.

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A survey of all patients who consulted at the Psychiatric Service of a general hospital during a one month period was used to evaluate factors influencing the referral of the patient to the specialist. A preponderance of young females was observed. Patients presenting with somatic symptoms, anxiety or depression were usually referred from another physician, while patients with psychotic disorders and problems related to alcohol abuse were first seen by the specialist. Almost half of the patients had been previously treated, usually with anxiolytic drugs and the median time between the first consult and the referral was 52 weeks. Better systems for derivation of these patients must be developed.