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## **THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT: Management of acute psychiatric emergencies**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this module is to inform GPs and other primary care clinicians about the Mental Health Act ("the Act"). The Act applies to people with a "mental disorder" - a term used to cover mental health problems (including dementia), personality disorders, and learning disability.

Clinicians may use the Act infrequently, so this module will clarify the various Sections, and help clinicians with several different issues:

- understanding the Act, in order to undertake the responsibilities that are required in primary care
- when to use the Act: maximising patient safety; protecting others from harm
- how to use the Mental Health Act, in a general practice setting and out-of-hours; principles, roles and responsibilities
- patients under the influence of alcohol/drugs, who are not considered to have a mental disorder, but still require our care
- when it is appropriate to refer and collaborate - who to speak to, and practicalities of getting help
- compliance with mental health care – i.e. how patient compliance with treatment is affected by the Act.

One of the major problems is defining the clinical conditions that fulfil "mental health disorder" as described in the Act – e.g. dealing with physical illness, and drug or alcohol abuse. The module will help clarify this.

There are different types of detention which need to be understood, including

- the Emergency Detention Certificate
- the Compulsory Treatment Order
- other powers including the ability of the Police to act, to help someone who appears to be suffering from a mental health disorder