

# Clinical psychology in orthopaedic surgery

**i** Important information  
for patients psychological  
therapies

## About this booklet

This booklet tells you about the role of clinical psychology in orthopaedic surgery and the psychological difficulties that some people may experience before or after surgery.

If you feel you need someone to talk to about any difficulties or issues you are having in relation to your orthopaedic surgery, this booklet tells you how to access support from a clinical psychologist within the hospital.

## What can a clinical psychologist help with?

Clinical health psychology is an applied discipline that focuses on the psychological wellbeing of people with a health condition.

A clinical psychologist is a mental health specialist who is trained to help people who are experiencing distress or difficulty in their life.

They use different ‘talking therapies’ to help people talk about, cope with, and adjust to, difficulties that cause emotional distress. Unlike psychiatrists, clinical psychologists do not prescribe medication.

## Why might someone see a clinical psychologist?

Clinical psychologists help people with a wide range of health problems. Some of the more common psychological difficulties experienced by patients are issues, such as anxiety, depression, and getting used to changes in your health.

However, a clinical psychologist can also help with other common emotional and adjustment difficulties, including bereavement and loss issues, relationship problems, memory problems, alcohol and substance misuse and difficulties eating or sleeping.

Some distress is common and perfectly normal leading up to, and after, surgery. Some people undergoing surgery may experience a more intensive or longer period of distress. There are a number of reasons for this and it can affect people who are experiencing a longer stay in hospital than they may have expected.

## Recognising distress

Distress can affect all of our lives and can show in different ways, such as:

- Feeling down, depressed or hopeless
- Unable to relax, feeling nervous, anxious or on edge
- Having difficulty falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much
- Feeling isolated from friends and family
- Experiencing worries about the future
- Having difficulty adjusting to the changes in your physical health
- Struggling to cope with your rehabilitation plan
- Feeling concerned about potential changes in relationships or your level of independence

If you regularly feel this way, we may be able to help you.

## How do I know if I need help?

You may find that you are experiencing some of the following difficulties due to your physical health condition. You may be:

- Struggling to cope during your stay in hospital.
- Fed up being in hospital longer than you were supposed to be.
- Angry because of your physical health condition and what it is stopping you from doing.
- Struggling to come to terms with your physical health condition.
- Worried about the need for more surgery or interventions.
- Struggling to understand difficult information you have been told and what it means for you.
- Anxious about the future and unable to stop focusing on your physical health condition.

- Forgetting information and conversations.

Or, you might feel that you are just not quite right and are:

- Unable to stop worrying about your health, finances or family wellbeing.
- Easily annoyed, angry or irritable.
- Feeling you “can’t be bothered”.
- Feeling your relationships are a challenge or struggle.
- Avoiding situations because you are scared of what might happen.
- Having trouble focusing on normal things, e.g. reading the newspaper or watching TV.
- Feeling like you have let yourself or others down.
- No longer enjoying activities or struggling to find things interesting.

These are some examples of how a physical health difficulty can have a negative impact on your mental health and wellbeing.

### **How can I be referred to the Clinical Psychology Service?**

If you think you would like to see a clinical psychologist during your inpatient stay in hospital, talk to any of the healthcare professionals looking after you and they can refer you to our service. One of our psychologists will then contact you on the ward to offer you an appointment and provide further resources if required. We can also highlight additional support services that may be available (e.g., via your GP) following your discharge from hospital.

### **What should I expect?**

You will have a chance to talk about the impact your condition is having on you, unhelpful thoughts and feelings that show up and how they get in the way of the things you are trying to do (e.g. rehabilitation exercises).

We will usually ask about other aspects of your life and personal experiences. This will help us understand you as a person, and not just the symptoms you are experiencing.

The length of the appointment will vary depending on how you are feeling physically and emotionally. The first appointment with a psychologist can last up to 1 hour, but shorter appointments are often needed for people who are seen as an inpatient on the ward.

To prepare for your appointment, we recommend that you write down any questions you want to ask.

### **What happens next?**

Some people only see a clinical psychologist for 1 session, others may need several sessions, and others for longer.

Occasionally it may be better for you to see someone from a different service instead (e.g. as an outpatient within your local area, for example). If this is better for you, we will agree this with you and help arrange this for you.

### **What if I need to be seen urgently?**

The Orthopaedic Clinical Psychology Service is not an emergency service and we may not be able to see you right away. Please talk to a member of your inpatient healthcare team if you feel that your situation is urgent or call Breathing Space 0800 83 85 87.

### **Appointments**

You will usually be seen in person on the ward at NHS Golden Jubilee. Appointments are also available via video calls or over the phone. The number of appointments will depend on the plan that is agreed with you.

## Do I have to talk about everything with the clinical psychologist?

The clinical psychologist will ask you questions about your current situation and the concerns and difficulties related to your surgery.

To get a better understanding, they will ask you about issues other than your specific health condition. For example, we may ask about your usual ways of coping with difficult things, other stresses in your life and your family and relationships, if this is relevant.

You do not have to answer all the questions if you prefer not to talk about a particular issue, however, it helps if you can be as honest and open as possible. The team will always respect your decision on what you do and do not want to talk about.

## What should I do if I cannot attend an appointment?

Please contact the Clinical Psychology Service on **07970 496554** or speak to a member of the care team.

We will try to rearrange your appointment at a more convenient time for you. If you no longer want an appointment with a clinical psychologist, please let us know as this will enable us to offer this appointment to someone else.

We wish you good mental and physical health during your journey with NHS Golden Jubilee.

## Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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