

The Utility of Qualitative Methods in the Evaluation of Pharmacological Treatment for Convicted Male Sexual Offenders

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Background

- Interventions with sex offenders in UK prisons are primarily psychological in nature, adopting a CBT approach
- High levels of sexual preoccupation and hypersexuality in high risk offenders appears to interfere with engagement on psychological treatments, potentially resulting in poor outcome on programmes
- Evidence suggests the potential for use of medical treatment in aiding the management and treatment of risk factors such as sexual preoccupation
- This is important since sexual preoccupation (both in the offence chain and generally) is the most frequently occurring 'strongly present' risk factor in sex offenders (Hocken, Winder & Grayson, in prep).

Context

Her Majesty's Prison Whatton

- 840 adult males convicted of a sexual offence
- Medication commenced in November 2009
- 99 referrals
 - Approximately 90% of these receive medication
- Medications used:
 - SSRI (Fluoxetine & Paroxetine)
 - Anti-androgen (Cyproterone acetate / Androcur)
 - GnRH agonist (Triptorelin)

The Evaluation

Mixed method evaluation

- Quantitative components to assess effects of medication on clinical measures of sexual preoccupation and hypersexuality and on psychometric measures of sexual deviance, sexual compulsivity, personality, anxiety & depression
- Qualitative component to explore in depth experiences of the medication

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Key Findings

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	Key features	Key findings
Service user studies	<p>Aim: To explore the use of anti-libidinals to reduce sexual preoccupation and/or hypersexuality in convicted sexual offenders</p> <p>Participants: 19 adult male sex offenders</p> <p>Medication: Anti-androgens, SSRIs or combined</p> <p>Analysis: Thematic analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced sexual preoccupation & arousal • Improved impulse & emotional control • Some noncompliance • No prior knowledge of medication • Concerns about effects & long term use
Therapist study	<p>Aim: To explore the experiences of individuals involved in the referral of pharmacological treatment and those who work with sexual offenders receiving pharmacological treatment</p> <p>Participants: 8 intervention staff</p> <p>Analysis: Thematic analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offenders' concerns & insight • Lack of feedback • Lack of awareness about treatment & lack of support • Concerns about throughcare
Offender supervisor study	<p>Aim: To explore the perspectives and experiences of offender supervisors in relation to the pharmacological treatment</p> <p>Participants: 6 offender supervisors</p> <p>Analysis: Thematic analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offenders' reluctance to engage • Lack of feedback • Lack of awareness • Excluded from treatment process • Importance of throughcare

Implications

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Service users had no prior knowledge of medication



Service users' concerns about effects and long term use



Service users' lack of insight



Increase awareness for offenders



Training / education



Training for staff

Perceived lack of support for those outside psychology

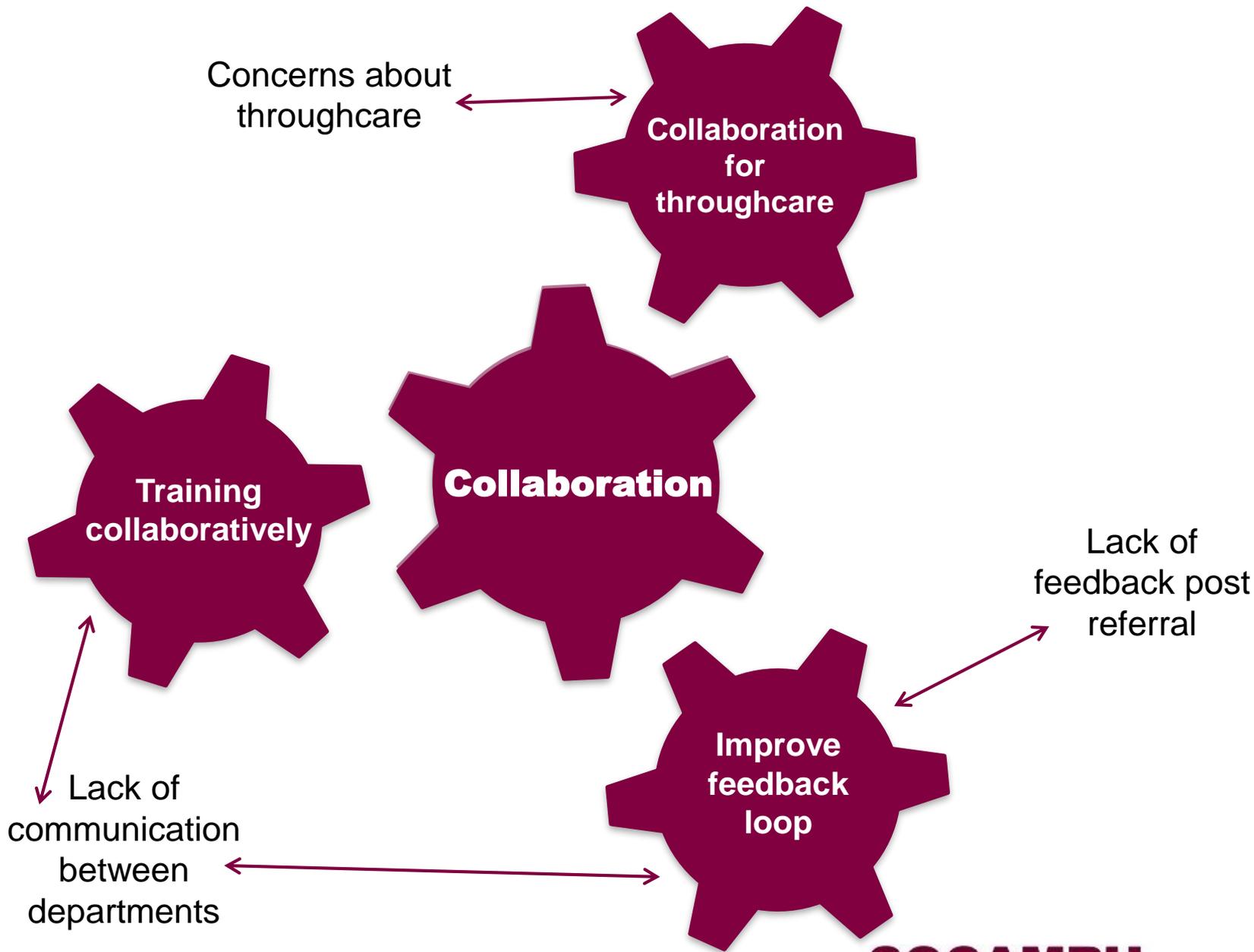


Lack of awareness among those outside psychology



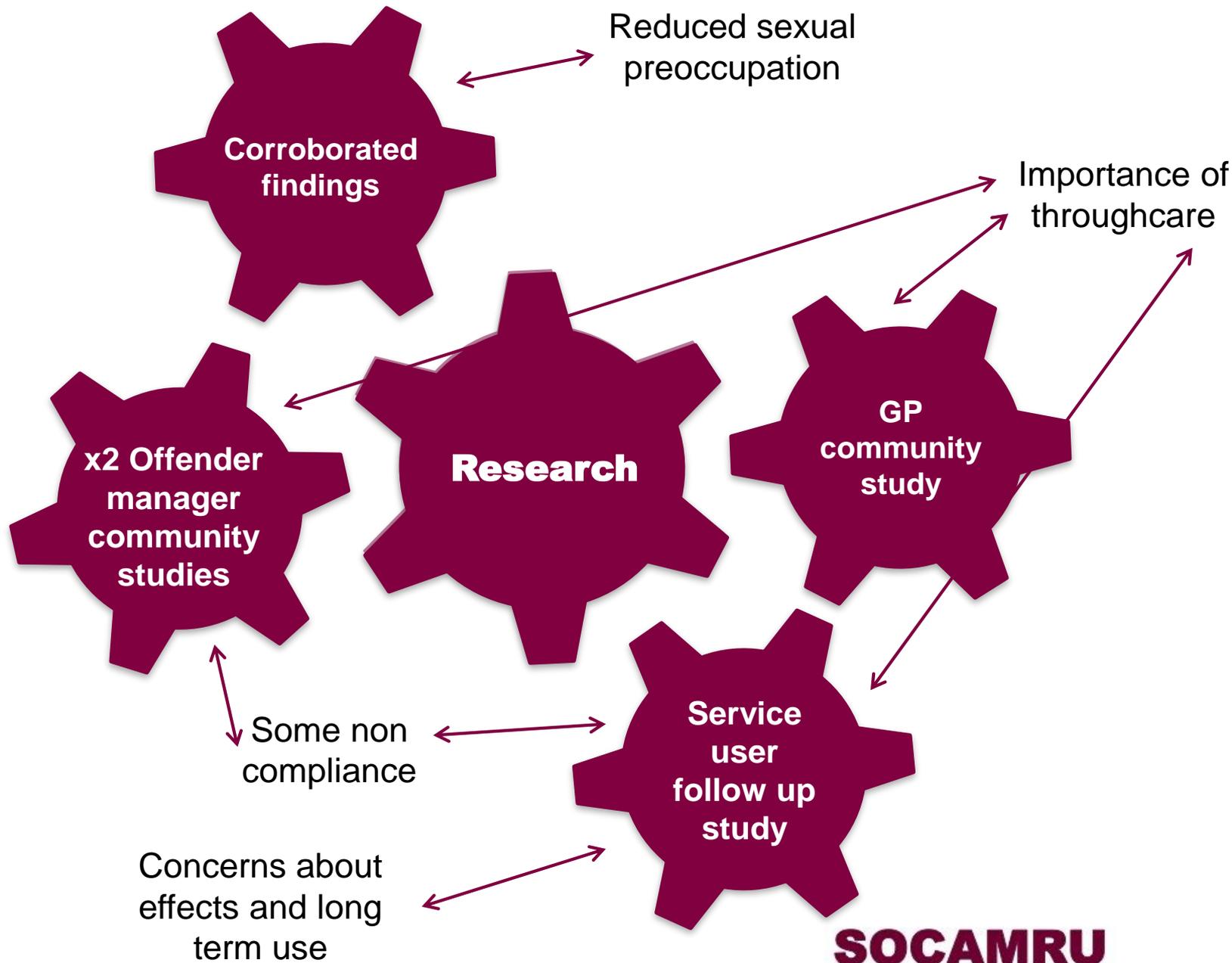
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Conclusions

- Qualitative research helps us to understand the context of a treatment service and the experiences of the individuals who participate in the service
- Adds an additional dimension to quantitative elements of an evaluation through providing an understanding into the effectiveness of interventions more generally and at a deeper level
- This can reveal the need for change, in this instance:
 - The need for further education/awareness for prison staff and offenders regarding the medication
 - A change in the referrals process such that a feedback loop is set up for all referrals
 - A focus on collaboration between departments and the community
 - Further research exploring the transition and sustainability in the community

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