

Working with Trauma in Seahorse Paediatric Intensive Care Unit

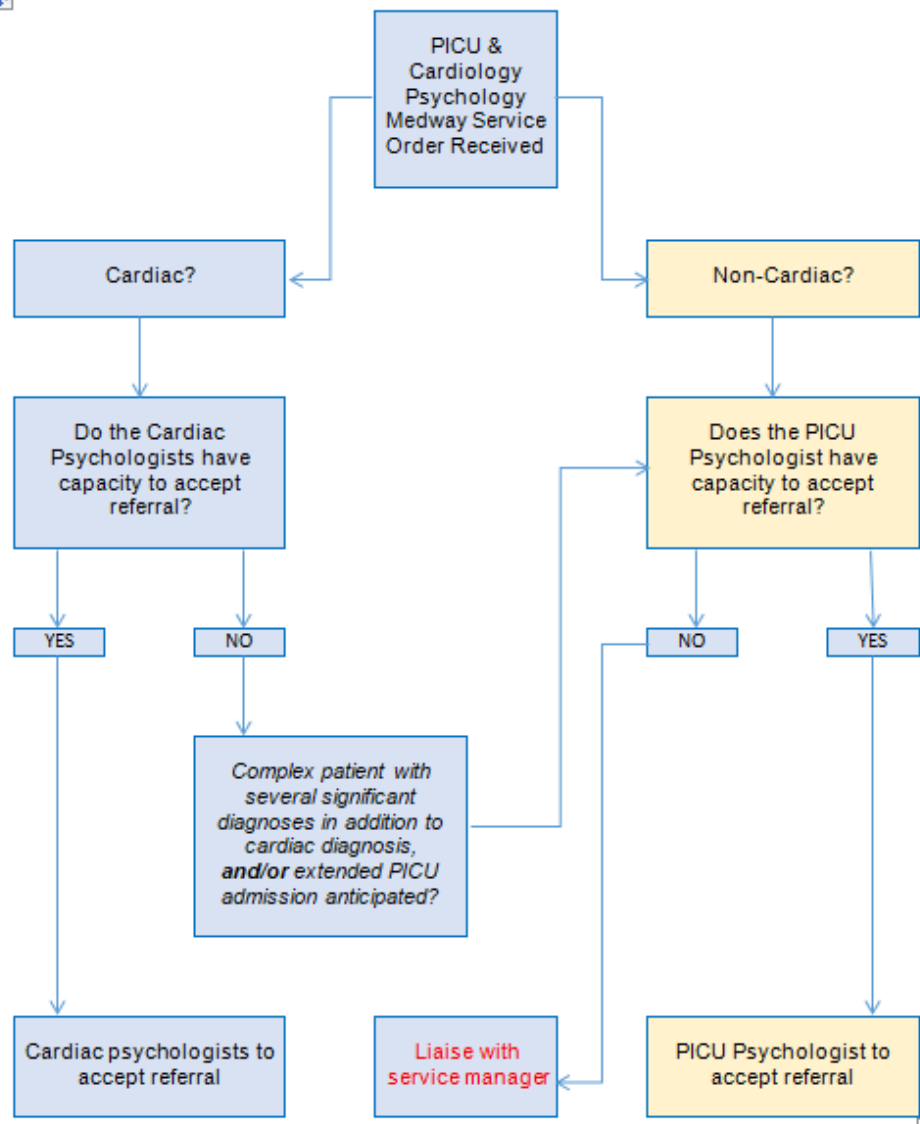
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Setting the scene: Seahorse PICU orientation video



<http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/your-hospitals/bristol-royal-hospital-for-children/what-we-do/seahorse-intensive-care-unit/>

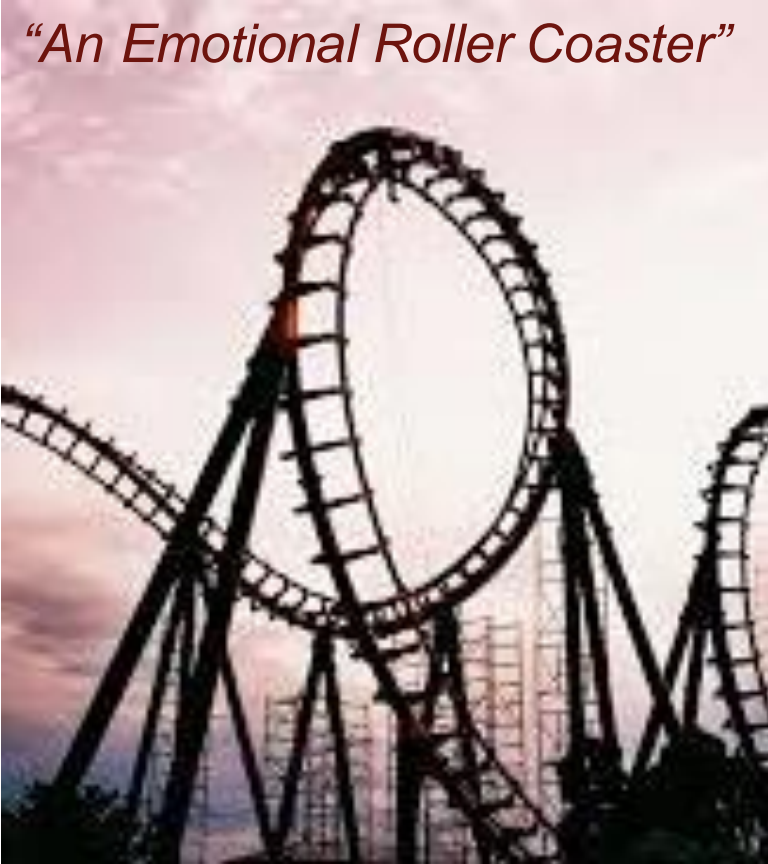


PICU & Cardiac Patient Pathways

- Approx. 50% cardiac patients
- Aim → ward/repatriation ASAP:
 - brief admission
 - longer stay
 - sudden event
- PICU Psychologist
 - Non-cardiac patients
 - Complex patients with several significant diagnoses (under different specialisms & hospital teams) in addition to cardiac diagnosis
 - Patients where extended PICU admission anticipated?

Parent's experiences of PICU

"An Emotional Roller Coaster"



- *"You are asking me to hand my baby over to you"*
- Numerous doctors, nurses & HCPs
- Constant change and uncertainty about the future
- Medical terms and complicated medical equipment
- Away from home and social support - where to stay?
- Finance and employment
- Impact on family & siblings
- Feeling helpless and de-skilled as a parent
- Adjusting to child's altered appearance
- Lack of sleep and irregular meals
- Emotionally overwhelmed → Numb
- ... and everything else

Both unexpected or planned admissions can feel very overwhelming

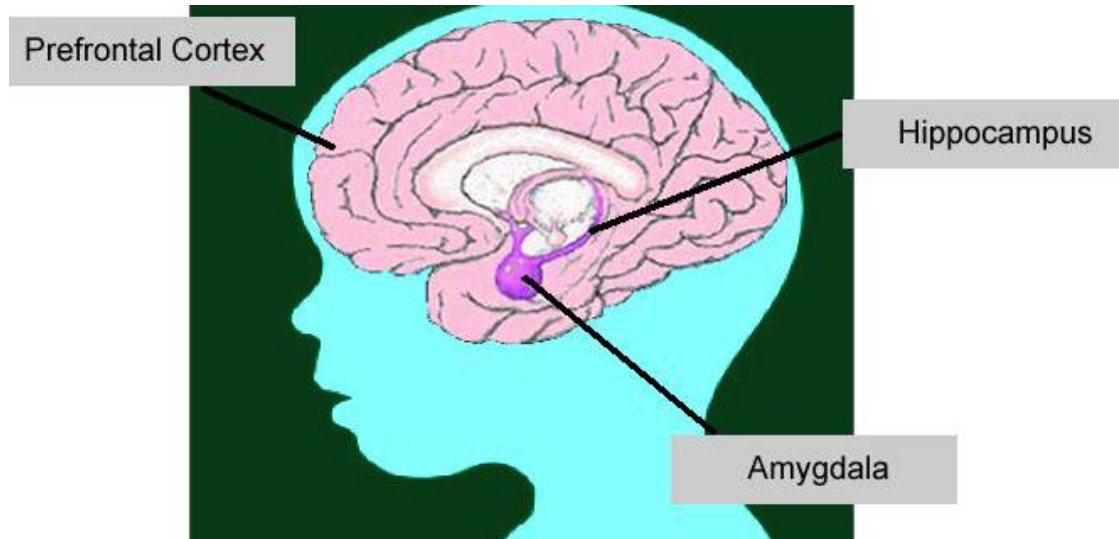
What parents and carers often say ...



The psychologist offers a safe space to express, reflect and make sense of difficult, complex and often intense, emotions

- *“How do I tell my other children?”*
- *“I feel guilty when I am here and I feel guilty when I am at home with my other children”*
- *“I know I should take a break, but I can’t bring myself to leave my baby”*
- *“I’m worried about what they will say in the meeting on Monday”*
- *“They tell us something and then the next day it changes”*
- *“I’m worried about my partner – s/he’s just not coping”*
- *“I can’t stop thinking about [event]”*
- *“Sometimes I feel like it’s not happening to me”*

Helping parents and carers understand trauma reactions



“Normal response to an abnormal event”

- Normalising reactions - fight flight or freeze
- The brain & trauma - understanding flashbacks
- Simple language & analogies

Layers of trauma



- Current / recent trauma relating to admission
 - Critical event e.g. arrest at home
 - Witnessing carrying out resuscitation
 - Journey to hospital
 - A&E
 - Surgery, scans etc.
 - Invasive interventions in PICU
- Impact of pre-existing/historical trauma
- Recent life events - people have complicated lives

Supporting parents and carers in PICU after a traumatic event



- What does coping look like?
- Developing supportive network
- Identifying strengths and previous coping skills
- Self-care
- Grounding
- Spirituality
- Getting involved in child's care again
- *Psychological growth

After PICU: how you can help

What if memories of critical event or PICU stay do not subside and adversely impact on daily living?

- *“I’m coping now but I think I might need to access support later when we get home”*
- Social support
- Listen and reassure strong feelings and reactions are normal
- Self-care and regular routines
- Think about what type of support needed?
 - GP consultation?
 - Statutory org., charity, faith community
 - Professionals with skills in working with trauma (PICU roller coaster)



Top 10 Tips for Families



1. *Be kind to yourself*
2. *Even a routine admission can feel traumatic - everyone is different and your reaction is OK*
3. *Remind yourself how you have coped in the past – you can do it again*
4. *Accept support, you do not have to do this alone*
5. *You do not have to respond to every phone call and text, ask one trusted person to update everybody*
6. *Rest: take breaks from the ward: your child will need you there more when they wake up*
7. *Involve siblings - you can talk to the team about how you can do this*
8. *Consider a PICU Diary to record memories and milestones in a meaningful way*
9. *Talk to your child's nurse about the non-medical child and family support services available*
10. *If after a month to six weeks of getting home, intrusive thoughts are getting in the way of every day living consider talking to your GP or health visitor*

Patient diaries



Parent feedback:

- *“It gives me hope. I looked back and realised we have had three good days, it was just that one day that was a bad day”*
- *“It helped my older child understand what was going on and for him to also have input”*
- *“I read it every night and reflect on what we have come thorough. I think we’ve made it through another day - where’s the book”*

Thank you

Equity
of access

Seamless
care

Meeting
national
standards

Continual
improvement

Patient
voice