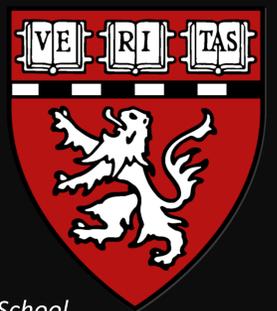




# Treating Patients on a COVID-19 Positive Inpatient Psychiatric Unit: A Case Report



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## Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic presents inpatient psychiatric units with a unique challenge because confined space and close patient quarters put this already vulnerable population at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 disease
- In order to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 on inpatient psychiatric units, the Veteran's Affairs Boston Healthcare System restructured the inpatient psychiatric service to create an entire unit dedicated to psychiatric patients with COVID-19 in need of an inpatient hospitalization

## Methods

- To our knowledge, this is the first report of a psychiatric patient treated on a dedicated COVID-19 psychiatric inpatient unit

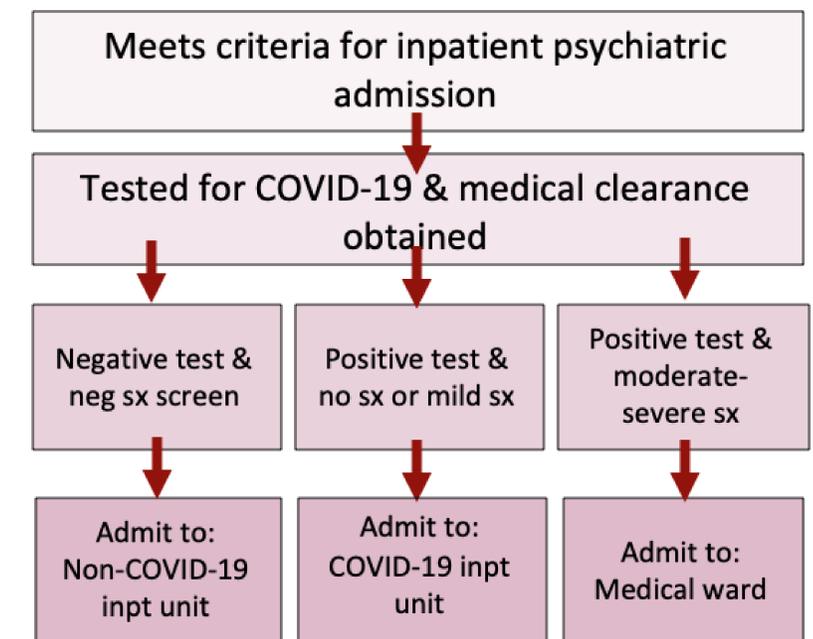
## Results

- Pt is a 79 year old with a PMH significant for HTN, HLD, PE on Coumadin, and PPH of PTSD and MDD who presented for worsening depression and suicidal ideation with plan to overdose on medications
- Patient also endorsed drinking 2-3 glasses of wine. He was also prescribed valium but denied recent use. Patient's care giver expressed concerns that the patient is under reporting alcohol use and is misusing/overusing benzodiazepines
- Tested positive for COVID-19 and was admitted to the COVID-19 inpatient psychiatric unit. Patient was asymptomatic at time of admission (Figure 1)
- Patient completed detox with Ativan per CIWA protocol
- During hospital course patient endorsed increased agitation and anxiety related to COVID-19
- Patient was medically monitored throughout admission for COVID-19 disease progression. He remained asymptomatic throughout treatment course
- His depression improved and suicidal ideations resolved during hospital course

A dedicated COVID-19 inpatient psychiatric unit is beneficial for asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic patients who are experiencing psychiatric decompensation or at high risk of harm to themselves or others.

The increased medical supervision in a COVID-19 inpatient psychiatric unit may be of particular benefit to the geriatric population since the disease course of COVID-19 can cause patients to rapidly decompensate.

### Figure 1



## Discussion

- All inpatients deserve patient-centered treatment in a safe environment regardless of infection
- Benefits of a COVID-19 inpatient psychiatric unit:
  - Provision of acute mental healthcare for patients who are at high risk of harm to themselves
  - Decreases risk of COVID-19 exposure to other patients
  - Minimizes utilization of valuable medical resources including medical ward beds that are often needed for patients with higher medical acuity
  - Medical monitoring for acute medical decompensation in patients who may otherwise be quarantining at home without medical supervision
    - Particularly beneficial for geriatric patients who have higher COVID-19 mortality rates
- Limitations of a COVID-19 inpatient psychiatric unit:
  - Increased anxiety and agitation related to being on a COVID-19 unit, and having COVID-19
  - Physical distancing guidelines may limit patient activities while admitted to the unit
  - Risk of exposure to staff if patients are not compliant with physical distancing and/or PPE