

Changes in aggression and coercion during a Swedish Safewards trial: a quasi-experimental longitudinal study with comparison wards.

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Conclusion

No statistically significant effects were found, but trends toward reduced aggression and use of mechanical restraint were observed following the implementation of Safewards. These findings emphasize the importance of further research with enhanced fidelity assessment and the exploration of additional factors that may influence implementation.



Introduction

Coercive measures (e.g., mechanical restraint, seclusion, and involuntary medication) in psychiatric inpatient care are associated with ethical concerns and the risk of trauma and retraumatization. **The Safewards model** offers a structured and evidence-based approach to reduce conflict and containment while fostering a safer and more therapeutic ward- milieu. This is the first study to evaluate the impact of the Safewards model on reducing violence and coercive measures in Swedish psychiatric inpatient care.

Aim: To evaluate the implementation of the Safewards model in Swedish psychiatric inpatient wards and examine changes over time in (1) aggressive incidents and (2) the use of coercive measures.

Methods:

Pre-post naturalistic study (2020–2022) involving 9 intervention wards (general psychiatry) and 9 matched comparison wards.

Measures:

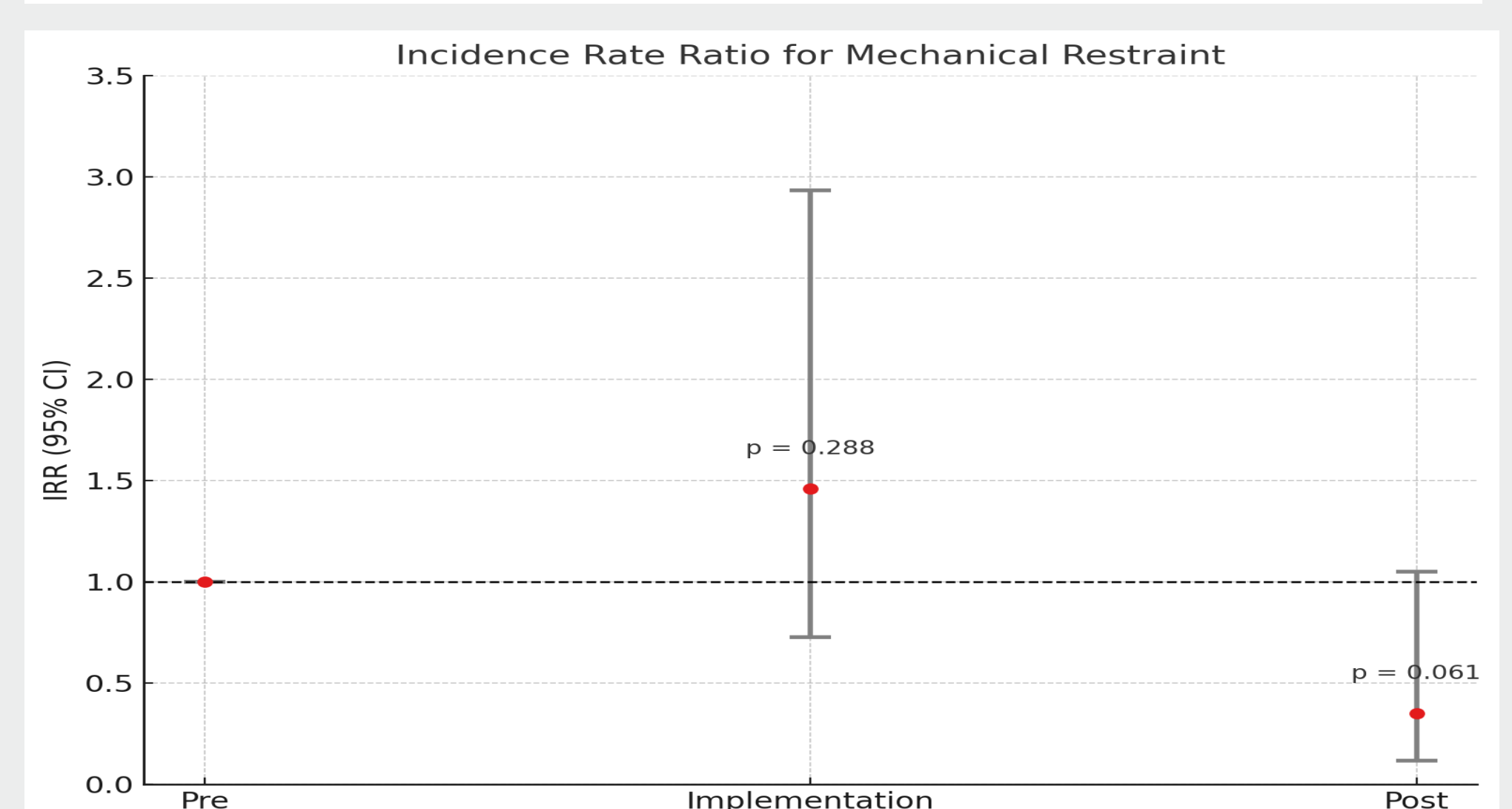
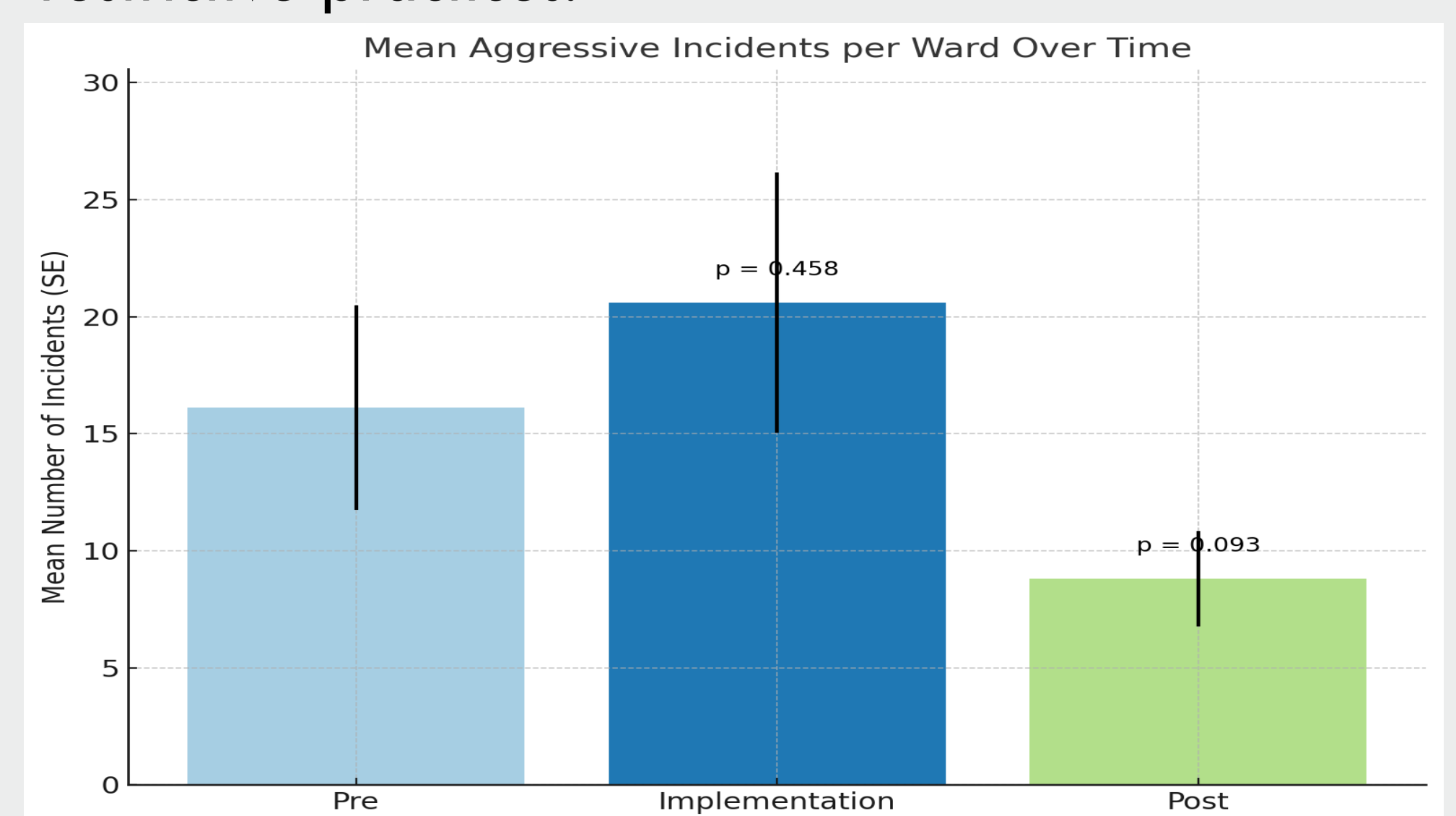
- **Aggression:** Staff Observation Aggression Scale – Revised (SOAS-R)
- **Coercion:** Administrative hospital data
- **Implementation process:** S-NoMAD (Normalization Process Theory) and Safewards Fidelity Checklist

Analysis:

- Poisson regression (Incidence Rate Ratios, IRR) for coercive measures; Wilcoxon rank-sum test for aggression.

Findings

- Normalization and fidelity scores increased over time, indicating a gradual integration of the model into everyday practice.
- A declining trend in reported aggressive incidents was observed, although this did not reach statistical significance.
- A potential reduction in the use of mechanical restraints was noted, though this also did not reach statistical significance, suggesting a shift towards less restrictive practices.



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