

## Critically examining deaths in psychiatric detention

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### **Abstract**

This paper will critically examine the deaths of patients who die in psychiatric detention in England and Wales along with those who died in asylums historically. Each and every year, patients die in contentious circumstances yet very little attention is given publicly to these deaths. The paper will draw upon the views of bereaved families, legal practitioners and coroners from a contemporary perspective, alongside archival data in order to situate the historical perspective. Integral to the paper is understanding how patients are responded to in both life and death, along with the response to bereaved families and patient advocates. The paper will also critically explore the issues and failings which allow these deaths to be dominated by issues of silencing, marginalisation and a lack of accountability. Of particular interest here is the post-death investigation processes and how these deaths are processed through the coroners courts. By exploring both a historical and contemporary perspective the paper will be able to trace the response to these deaths over several centuries whilst highlighting how such responses have contributed to the lack of attention and concern that these deaths warrant.

**Keywords:** Mental health; deaths in custody; marginalisation; bereaved families