

TRAINING ACTIVITY: AWARENESS RAISING OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS REGARDING THE GENERAL HEALTH CARE OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

Introduction

People with mental illness suffer from different forms of discrimination from society, almost always unconsciously. From the erroneous and common association between mental illness and violence up to the difficulties for finding or keeping a job, keeping or creating new social relationships or access to housing. These persons tell many stories of the rejection derived from wearing a label for having an illness that even today is still surrounded by "an aura of secrecy."

One of the barriers that people with mental illness encounter is precisely the inadequate care they receive from health care professionals. The care for the general health is not always the same regarding a person who has a mental illness and another who does not, even though these people may suffer physical illnesses like any other. In fact, they are even more exposed to suffer physical problems due to the side effects of the medication that they take, and often, also for maintaining inadequate habits of self-care.

This training activity intends to reflect on the situations of discrimination that appear in the general health care services towards people with mental illness and on how professionals can help these people to improve their quality of life.

The viewing of the documentary "Stigma and attention to the general health of people with mental illness" will facilitate the debate and reflection on the role of professionals in caring for these people.

Directed to: Professionals

Objective: To debate and reflect on the attention given to the general health of people with mental illness and analyze the role of professionals in Primary care, the Emergency room, Mental health and other specialities, in order to improve it.

Duration: 1 hour

Methodology: Viewing of the documentary "Stigma and attention to the general health of people with mental illness"(25 minutes) and video- forum, chaired by a mental health professional (35 minutes).

Resources needed: Audiovisuals (Computer with DVD Player, sound amplifier, projector and screen), flip chart and markers.

Video - Documentary



SYNOPSIS

Through the opinions of professionals, mental health service users and relatives, the documentary "Stigma and attention to the general health of people with mental illness" (2011, 25 minutes) proposes a reflection on the general health care provided to people with mental illness in health services.

In many cases, aspects that negatively affect life expectancy of these people are neglected, and for this they could be exposed to other diseases. A key message of the video is that awareness and reflection of the professionals could improve the general health of people with mental illness in a remarkable way.

The Regional Mental Health Office of the Andalusian Health Service and the Comprehensive Mental Health Plan of Andalusia, together with the Area of Citizenship, Ethics and Participation of the Andalusian School of Public Health, have produced this documentary. The video was recorded in Seville, Malaga and Granada. The Andalusian Federation of people with mental illness (En Primera Persona) and the Federation of families and users (FEAFES Andalucía) have collaborated in the realization of the video, as well as the Andalusian Public Foundation for the Social Integration of People with Mental Illness (FAISEM).

"Stigma and attention to the general health of people with mental illness" describes realities and situations in which people with mental illness do not receive adequate

attention, in most cases due to ignorance and lack of reflection. The documentary proposes how to improve this, giving the floor to the professionals, people with mental illness, relatives and caregivers.

The exposed cases in Primary care, Emergencies, Hospitalization or Outpatient services highlight one of the pending subjects for improving the quality of life and to support the recovery of people with mental illness, as well as the importance of promoting a healthy lifestyle.

The video is available at

<https://www.1decada4.es/mod/page/view.php?id=581>

A reduced version, with a duration of 7 minutes (in Spanish with English subtitles), is available at the same link.

FACT SHEET

Direction: Lala Bono

Script: Lala Bono and Ángel Luis Mena

Filming: Ángel Luis Mena and David Prieto

Editing: Moli7, Espacio Audiovisual

Design: Laura Apolonio and Moli7, Espacio Audiovisual

Music: Broke for free, My luck

Participants (in order of appearance)

José Luis Agud Aparicio (Medical Doctor, Hospital Severo Ochoa, Leganés, Madrid)

Juan Manuel Espinosa (General Practitioner, Centro de Salud del Palo, Málaga)

Carmen Iglesia (FEAFES-Andalusia – Association ASAENES)

Pablo García-Cubillana (Mental health nurse and Psicologist, Adviser of The Regional Mental Health of the Andalusian Health Service)

Teresa del Sol Chicharro (FAISEM Málaga)

David Lara (Theatre actor and service user)

Emilio Andrade Conde (Mental health nurse. Hospital Virgen de la Victoria)

José Manuel Arévalo López (Federation of service users EN PRIMERA PERSONA - Association SAPAME Granada)

Luis Fernández Portes (Psychiatrist. FAISEM)

Josefa Domingo Domingo (Federation of service users EN PRIMERA PERSONA - Association SAPAME Granada)

Video made within the context of the II Comprehensive Mental Health Plan of Andalusia 2008-2012 (Strategies: “Mental Health Information and Communication” and “Health Promotion for people with severe mental disorders”), with the advice of the Mental Health Awareness Group of Andalusia. Funded by the Ministry of Health of the Junta de Andalucía, through Funds for Interterritorial Cohesion of the Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, as a support for the implementation of the Mental Health Strategy of the National Health System.

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE

Introduction

- What do you think may have more influence: that the problem is underestimated or that there is a lack of awareness?
- What is the influence of a diagnosis of mental illness when talking with a patient?
- Do you think that fear or distrust towards these people are present in the health services?
- Are people with mental illness "different" patients from those without mental illness?
- Are general health problems placed in the background when the patient has a mental illness?
- Is the metabolic syndrome or "death quartet" taken into account when dealing with patients with mental illness?
- Is there sufficient awareness of the prevalence of cardiovascular problems in people with mental illness? And that the cardiovascular problems are the main cause of mortality?

Primary Health

- Do you think that a diagnosis of severe mental illness can cause that all these people are "placed under the same umbrella" and stereotypes are used?
- Do you think a person with mental illness deserves less confidence when explaining symptoms of common illnesses?
- Do you think that the perception of pain is different in a person with mental illness?
- Do you think that the General practitioner can play a central role in the general health care of people with mental illness?

Emergencies, Hospitalization, Specialized Care

- Could people with mental illness receive a less adequate attention in the Emergency room (ER) by being directly referred to mental health?
- Can it happen that inadequate questions are asked to people with mental illness in the initial screening in the ER and that for this reason an intervention of the psychiatrist is requested?
- If a person with severe mental illness goes to the ER, should s/he always be seen initially by the on-call psychiatrist? Are the general health problems of people with mental illness minimized?

- How important is a diagnosis of severe mental illness in a patient's clinical record for a professional? What does this mean for the attention in medical consultation?
- Do you think that a person with severe mental illness is usually compared with a person without skills?
- Do professionals fear for their safety in the presence of people with mental illness?

Drug treatment and interactions

- Do you talk frankly with patients about the drug treatments prescribed and their side effects?
- Are patients treatments regularly reviewed, both those for the mental illness and for other diseases, and also as a whole?
- Are the interactions between the drugs for mental illness and other medicine known?
- Are patients always heard when they question the prescribed medicine?

Role of service users and relatives

- What responsibility do you think a person with mental illness has about taking care of his/her general health? And their relatives?
- How can professionals help service users and their relatives to take better care of their general health?

Promotion of healthy habits

- Do professionals take into account people with mental illness when thinking about promoting healthy lifestyle habits?
- Do you think that people with mental illness would respond positively to health promotion programs designed for the general population?
- What is your opinion about the elimination of the exception of allowing smoking in mental health services in the anti-tobacco law? (Note: This happened in Spain in 2010)
- What is your opinion about the permissiveness that exists towards smoking in people with mental illness?
- Are the chances of smoking cessation or reduction underestimated in people with mental illness?
- Can it cause discomfort in professionals to discuss issues of sexuality and reproductive health with patients with mental illness?