EI-COV20-032 - Probleme und Lösungsansätze des gemeindenahen Betreuungsnetzes für Per-sonen mit einer psychischen Erkrankung unter COVID-19

Abstract

A few decades ago, persons suffering from severe and persistent mental disorders spent long periods of their lives in mental hospitals in dismal conditions. Due to advancements in treatment and the professional assistance by community mental health services this “vulnerable group” can today lead a largely satisfactory li fe “in the community”. In Austria, a wide array of welfare -funded non -profit psychosocial organisations (PSOs) provide social psychiatric therapy with employed multi - professional teams in ambulatory and mobile services, day structures, occupational projects and small - scale residential facilities. Since these services are essentially based on face -to -face contacts and movement in the community, the PSOs were hit at their core by the corona lockdown.

In the present project 70 PSOs in three Austrian provinces, caring for persons with severe mental disorders (e.g. schizophrenia; excluded were dementia, substance abuse and intellectual disability), were invited to take part in an anonymous online survey. The 243 replies received from managerial and operational staff showed that a large proportion of PSOs received only unclear information and assistance from their funding bodies, whether and how to adapt their services and how funding would continue.

Despite this insecurity, the lack of protective gear and problems with home office and human resources, staff of PSOs continued with high commitment to assist their clients, whose condition tended to worsen the longer the LD lasted. Health policy should be aware that PSOs are an essential component of mental health care, whose financing cannot be left to the arbitrariness of the welfare system putting them in a precarious situation. The multi -professional staff of PSOs with their focus on work “out there” in the community are a group as vulnerable as their clients. They serve a more severely ill group of patients than the “indoor” private mental health professionals working in single - handed offices and funded by social insurance. This should be considered by health policy as a topic of reform of the Austrian mental health care system.

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Further links to the persons involved and to the project can be found under
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