Psychiatry In Portugal – a brief historical review of the last 70 years

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OBJECTIVE

To review the Portuguese Psychiatry History after 1945.

BACKGROUND

The evolution of psychopharmacology in the 50's and the nearly simultaneous development of concepts such as "institutional psychotherapy" and "therapeutic community" modified the panorama of psychiatric approach and management. This change led to a progressive "dis-alienation" of mental illness but stroked an increasing need in primary care, particularly at the outpatient level. The greatest challenge in this period was the development of community facilities and social inclusion of patients¹.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

PubMed search with key terms "History", "Psychiatry" and "Portugal" (in English and Portuguese) together with consult of paper literature regarding the same theme.

RESULTS

1945 A new Health Law concerning the organization of psychiatric structures in Portugal was created, leading to the funding of the **Psychiatric Assistance Institute** in **1958**².

1962 The second psychiatric hospital in Oporto, **Magalhães Lemos**, was opened.

1963 The first **mental health care centres** in the community opened in Lisbon, Oporto and Coimbra, and in time, covered all district capitals, which allowed the transference of care from the hospital to the outpatient setting¹.

Fifty years after their projection by the Mato's decree of 1911³, the last two **agricultural colonies** for rehabilitation were established at Arnes and Montachique. The first was built in Lorrão in **1958**¹.

1992 A new law (127/92) stated that mental health care centres should be once again in the dependence of main general hospitals, which led to the development of psychiatric and mental health wards that remain to the present days².

2008 The **National Coordination for Mental Health** is launched within the National Health Plan 2004-2010. However, despite of all the approved projects regarding facilities for rehabilitation and social inclusion of psychiatric patients, there is still a long way to go nowadays. In many cases, the problem has been mitigated by the role played by the Order of Hospitaliers and the Holy House of Mercy. The promise of a true national research plan in psychiatry and mental health issues it yet to be achieved¹.

CONCLUSIONS

Seventy years after the beginning of the re-organization of psychiatric care in Portugal, there is still a faulty structure regarding rehabilitation and social inclusion, which leads to an overwhelming of patients in general hospitals and a community burden in primary care. This is a goal to be accomplished in the future.

Figure 1 – Magalhães Lemos Hospital⁴

References

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