

FIRST PERSON STORIES
ON
FORCED INTERVENTIONS AND
BEING DEPRIVED OF LEGAL CAPACITY

My first contact with the psychiatric system was at an early age----19 in 1970. I was committed to a private hospital, Lindville, in Cork city, Ireland. I spent 6 months there, pleading to go home everyday.

I endured a massive amount of ECT and a very heavy psychiatric drugs as the only therapy and was kept isolated. My friends used to call to see me, but I was not allowed to see them. In the end I managed to run away.

I had about 5 terms in Sarsfieldscourt over the years and endured ECT and more heavy drugging, at times involuntarily. When I tried to resist the drugs, male nurses clamped me to the bed and I was injected against my will.

I suffered the humiliating forced committals almost everytime. Once in 81, I was chased around the Renault garage, where I had bought my car 3 months before. I had and still have an ever present fear of being imprisoned against my will in a psychiatric institutiion.

As a committed patient, I had no rights whatsoever. I did not believe the the psychiatric system was helping me and said so. As I was non compliant I was made to suffer for it. I was not allowed go to occupational therapy much of the time-----as punishment.

In 79, after some time in Sarsfieldscourt, I talked with the other patients about how unsatisfactory this(psychiatric) mode of treatment was for us. We spoke out to the staff. I and others were sent to Our Ladys(The worst psychiatric institution in Cork). I was put in a locked ward there as punishment. I can't recall the details due to the massive doses of ECT and toxic drugs.

It was one of the others, whom I met in Our Ladys, who told me this. I was very traumatized by my internment there.

I had severe difficulty with memory loss from 21. Working in a jeweller's shop, I was asked about a customer's jewellery and I had no recall and was sacked for this. This pattern continued in the Irish Examiner newspaper where I worked for 23 years. This caused me gerat strain and difficulty. I worked initially at the counter taking advertisements. If I was ever asked about an advertisement, I had taken even a couple of days, before I could not tell my supervisor what I had done with it.

In 86, I was put on lithium for 'Manic Depression'. The dose given me was

excessively high. Over the years pharmacists told me this. Then in 93, my thyroid began to malfunction. I was attending Sarsfieldscourt for blood tests for the lithium and even when these were above the therapeutic level and I had symptoms the consultant never followed it up.

As a result my kidneys and liver are weak. By 98 I was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome(ME). I believe that ECT toxic drugs esp. lithium are major factors in the undermining of my health.

There is a tragedy that occurred in my family due I feel in great part to the limitations of the current psychiatric system. My I;mother had been given the same label as myself---' Manic Depression'. In 1985 she became extremely depressed. She was so bad she was hallucinating. She drowned herself in October 85.

I am writing this because I sincerely believe that the psychiatric system has been instrumental in destroying my mother's life and severely injuring and limiting mine.

The psychiatric system is both a failure and destructive.The clear sign of this is that they have labeled all psychiatric "illnesses" incurable. This to me is an admission of failure. They claim these "illnesses" to be genetic without any proof. Consequently their theory is based on a LIE. All the power is in the psychiatrists' hands. Radical change is needed.

Colette Ni Dhuinneacha.

Now with my contact with other survivors and MIndFreedom I feel room for HOPE in my life and feel my suffering has not been in vain.

My name is Diane Blakemore,
I live in Ashburton

I watched the news last night on TV 1 on "Electro Convulsive Therapy" ECT and was great to see as this is long overdue as this practice needs to be banned.

The doctors still say that "Modified ECT is safe" unlike the 60s

I am a victim of ECT, I had the "modified ECT" in year 2000 after having my last child.

I had gynaecology problems that were not dealt to and instead was prescribed mind altering drugs I did not need and ECT to add to my problems.

I had ECT seven times, and it gave me excruciating headaches, jaw pain, confusion, disorientation, memory loss (which I still have after 6 years) , muscle pain.

Some of these effects did not go away, they were not "short term" or short lived like they say!

The promoters of this ECT should have it, then they would have a different story to tell!

Mental health promote and provide **misinformation** on ECT to patients.

It is not safe nor effective, it is disabling practice that cripples people and needs to be banned.

I am with the patients rights, and back up Dr John Read, Dr Helen Smith and the patient rights,

someone has to come out of the closet and speak up for all those victims who are too afraid.

I am willing to do that since I have had the new "modified ECT" that is not safe or effective but disabling!

This is how modern ECT is administered!

I know I had it.

During ECT you are made unconscious, heavily sedated by tranquillizers. Since a muscle relaxant completely relaxes your whole body, including your lungs, you cant breathe so you are administered artificial respiration (oxygen),

then you are subjected to 150-200 volts of electricity to your delicate brain.

ECT produces a nerve racking convulsion and leaves people brain damaged!

You then wake up 10-20 minutes later in a "recovery room" with severe headaches and muscle pain,

memory loss, jaw pain, confused, disorientated, and frightened. This

is supposed to make you feel better or think straight!

This slaughter house practice is designed to ruin you, not make you feel better, it is unsafe and ineffective and needs to be banned for all the public.

I cannot believe they are thinking of giving this to children, pregnant woman and the elderly.

These promoters need a dose of their own medicine.

For a better understanding read Brain disabling treatments in psychiatry by Dr Peter Breggin .

Thank you for reading my email , I sent this to you in hope that you can use this for publication to help educate the community about this.

Feel free to contact me anytime.

Kind Regards

Diane Blakemore

166 Alford Forest Road

Ashburton

Ph: 03 3082089

027 467 0318

Email : gary.diane@clear.net.nz

In the NZ Herald Friday February 17, 2006.

Witness relives torment as psychiatric patient

by Martin Johnston health reporter.

Patients' Complaints

- Hundred of former patients have alleged they were abused at psychiatric hospitals, including Oakley, Tokanui and Porirua.

* 130 have filed High Court law suits against the Crown and 100 other cases are being prepared.

- They want compensation and damages of up to \$550,000 each.

* Their lawyers wanted an official inquiry, but the Government instead set a confidential listening forum for patients from up to

November 1992.

- By mid-December last year, 363 people had asked to meet the forum.

* 126 had been heard and further hearings were planned.

When Margaret Parry told her story to the Government forum for former psychiatric patients, her bad hospital memories surged back: the electro shock, the assaults, the sexual abuse.

Now that she has spoken to the Confidential Forum for Former Psychiatric In-patients, she is ambivalent about its value.

“it brought up all those bad memories. It wasn’t very nice for a while, but it was good being able to talk about it to those three people [the panel].”

“Because it brings it out in the open, the public will know what happened – and what happened today.

It might help some people to talk about it and get it off their minds a little bit.

It doesn’t help me. I can’t forget it. It affects everything I do.”

Now 69 and living in Hamilton, Ms Parry was in and out of Porirua Psychiatric hospital near Wellington over five years in the 1950s, when aged 18 to 23.

She was first admitted after her mother took her to a psychiatrist because “I was troubled at home”.

“It was the worst time in my life. I thought I was going to die.”

Ms Parry said she was given Electric Convulsive Shock (ECT) without anaesthetic or muscle –relaxant drugs.

Nurses often hit, slapped and punched her and twisted her arm up her back.

“I was sexually abused by the nurses, two of them ... They hit me with a shoe on my bare bottom.

A judge ruled it was sexual abuse, 10 years go [overturning an ACC ruling]

and I get a little bit each month, an independence allowance.”

Ms Parry is among more than 120 people mostly former patients, to have spoken to the forum since its hearings began last June.

Some staff and family members of former patients have also been heard.

The forum's chairman, former judge Anand Satyanand, said in the report to ministers in December that many had described their fears as in-patients.

They told of extensive use of Electro Convulsive Shock Torture, deep-sleep therapy, seclusion and heavy medication regimes.

The beatings, indecent assaults and sexual violation by staff.

Twenty-one had been referred for counseling and others had been referred to the police and ACC.

Testimony

When I was 7 years old, they said that I was a very pleasant girl, a very good girl. They did not know how lost I was, while I experience joy in loving, in enjoying Nature, school, my little friends, my dreams. Overall, my dreams. My dreams... some of them were easily reached because if I wanted them, I got them, for example going to my little friend's home and camping in her garden. Of course, I asked for help to my nanny and she obtained the necessary things for me to go camping, and she went to the camp with me, we all enjoyed together ... dreams like this became reality.

The others, those dreams of seeing my parents live in harmony, dreams of having a family like my little friend's, those dreams did not work.... Until today I feel and I cry when remembering all the efforts I did, how many feats I always did to see my parents laughing, to enjoy life or to enjoy life with them. Sure they enjoyed life, but far from home, sure they did it.

That was my first great dream, my first unattainable obsession. In spite of all that, until I was 13 years old, in my way, I had been happy, locked up in "my rare world".

Little by little, seeing not only that was to obtain a normal home an obsession for me, but also that I had begun to be "rare", the nuns of the school and the "spiritual father," told me that I had to escape from the influence of the demon.

But having heard that thing about escaping from the influence of the demon, my martyrdom began, my disorientation within the world surrounding me began.

They killed my dreams.

My fear, my fears began.

Then, I had more and more doubts about myself, a psychiatrist, who was a relative of one of the nuns of the school, said that I was a pervert. I had told him one of the ideas that often came to my mind and which I could not avoid: during the sacred Mass, I used to imagine that the nuns and priests were naked, that thoughts made me laugh, and worried me at the same time. To me, their habits did not exist; they were false as much as their lessons and behaviors. I could not leave these thoughts that simultaneously scared me. These thoughts brought serious problems to me at school.

.Despite these issues, I continued getting the best grades. Even though focusing my attention was very difficult to me, I advanced in my studies.

After my first electroshock, I decided not to allow anybody either to touch or to talk to me about pills. That experience was terrible, I felt like an animal tied to the stretcher, like a furious animal. Happy moments from my picnics of childhood passed through my mind and my body shook, they subjected me and I wanted to return to my garden, the garden of the picnic of my childhood, and then, I did not understand what they were doing to me or why they did it, I only understood that if I could get free from that, I would not die, and I would never allow them to drive me crazy. It was January; I had finished High School a month before.

I do not know how much time I slept for, but when I woke up I just thought about fleeing.

Few days later I fled from home. My grandmother received me in her house, she lived alone. (Many years later I found out that she had been at a psychiatric hospital for some time). At that time, I became rarer and rarer but I had begun to feel comfortable with my peculiarities, I felt good. I had the happiness that I had lost when I was 13 again. I was free, dreaming, making reality my dreams, but without reaching that my great dream: the one where my family received me, integrated me, did not exclude me.

When I was 18, they gave me this alternative: either we declare you insane and you go to the madhouse, or you enter the Convent where the nuns of your old school love you. At my 18's, my second stage of joys ended within that Convent. The exorcisms, the lighted candles around my 18 years, I was on the floor, I still shake, it seems that I still hear the chorus of nuns, I wanted to die at each session, Why I did not die at each session? Why did I go through that torture? Until now, I do not understand it. But those exorcisms did not have good results.

I think that happened to me for me to be able to speak for our little brothers and sisters, who are stolen away from their 13-14 year old happiness..... their 18-19 year old happiness, the happiness of the best years of life.

Then I did not have more than one alternative, the same one I had had before: to flee. I could escape from that convent and be alone in the world, I began to be happy again. Little by little I recovered my identity, I still had "my things" and need to take a low dose of medicine and had much love that to give.

But they had stolen away my best years of adolescence, youth and I continue dreaming about the lost years, years of enjoyment, to meet friends in at college, to share and be with my sisters and brothers

From 18 to 28 I was just "another crazy person", fighting against stigma, exclusion.

Other madness came to me, "the madness of love". With my husband's support I began to look for direction, I found it. I do not know if this testimony will be useful.

I don't know if this testimony is useful at all. Perhaps I did not tell the hardest part. If you expected something harder, something that can make people to respect our right to exist, the right to be different, the right to assume our identity on our own best terms, to look for and decide about how we feel and experience, what is the best for us, I believe that the strongest story would be that you, states, families, community, acknowledge that when you exclude us, or when you make decisions on our behalf, about each step in our lives, without giving the option to speak on our own behalf, to talk to you, like siblings within a family talk to each other, then this is the strongest thing of this story, the story of you, the one that must be changed, oriented, not to continue to violate our right to be recognized as equal persons with the same rights and obligations.

'The crazy one' is just a product of the fears of a competitive society where only the material exists.

Elena

A story ,where a father trusted in his own brother and in justice.

Two teenagers` real history (now they are adults)

Their mother died at the time they were 11 and 13 years old. Years later the father was in a sickness situation and he thought in the children`s future

He made the business transactions and he “insured the future” for his two sons, naming to his brother “TUTOR” for his two kids.(a legal process)

Finally after the Father passed to the other life, immediately the uncle “TUTOR” ,rent his house and moved with his wife and sons to live in the nephews` house. He started disturbing them until, finally he threw them, right to the street.

The teenagers lonely, without a place to live found reception on the street and they started smoking weed.

After the uncle was noticed about what was happening, he agreed with the medic director of a psychiatric hospital and as a “TUTOR” he had all the right to intern them, in the psychiatric hospital in the drugs and alcoholism area.

At these department, they had the chance to still growing up in age, knowledge and practice of mayor drugs.

Sometimes they got slide out from the hospital and went on the street to get some more drugs. They turned drug addicts, at that time they spent more years in the institution.

Once again the uncle was noticed about the drugs, he started, making an unpersonalization judgement (Interdicción) against the nephews.

Supported by judges and the hospital medics. The “TUTOR”got legal rights to name his nephews totally disabled (insane) at that time these young adults were 22 and 24 years old.

The “TUTOR” deceived to his nephews telling them the judgments were to make them free from living in the hospital.

They were free to go out from the institution. They went out to the street. They didn`t get their house and any other his father`s heritance. Actually the “TUTOR” enjoys with the house the one that is originally his nephews belonging.

Today they are 36-38 years old . They still fighting to put the drugs away, without a house to live, living were they get in, in a very poverty and very sad situation. They can`t make any claim to the law because they are declared “totally insane” (unpersonalized Interdictos).

They presented their case once in some communication programs, but they didn`t get

anything. They are still , with their life with many limitations, suffering on the street, in Lima – Peru.

Elena

My grandmother immigrated from Ireland with her Father. She grew up to be a well loved teacher, an alcoholic and a manic depressive. She died in a psychiatric ward. Her daughter, my mom, took care of her mother when she was drinking won a scholarship to college and eventually pursued a master's degree. At a young age she was electroshocked repeatedly for depression and continued to be well into my childhood. She was incarcerated when I was in the third grade, leaving me with the impression that she was being punished despite being a good Catholic.

I was diagnosed as a manic depressive at age 17, after showing extreme sensitivity to season. My changes between winter lethargy and summer energy were unpopular with my family, already traumatized by my mother's experiences. I had no information on how to soothe my system. Sleeping became difficult in the summers.

I left home against my parents' and in response to arguments and violence at home. Living in an exciting political collective, with all sorts of new social pressures on me, I was resolved to use my full scholarship to the middle-class Northwestern University. I did get there but almost immediately grew sick with bronchitis and exhaustion. My mind/neuroendocrine system collapsed and I hallucinated while hitchhiking to find some friends, support and comfort in Michigan. In Michigan I was picked up by hospital people and brought to a group home. This was in 1982. They were surprised that I had no street drugs in my system. My parents came and took me back to New York State, and incarcerated me in South Oaks Hospital in Amityville. I was scared, especially that I would be shocked. After 6 weeks of nonsense and heavy drugs (prolixin which was described as something to help me absorb my lithium. I was denied a PDR)-- I left the hospital against medical advice-- it was called elopement. I went with my Quaker friend to her home in Manhattan, several counties away.

However, I left a phone number for my parents so they wouldn't worry about me. My uncle, a Asst. District Atty., showed up at our door with cops. I said "what are my rights?" but no one knew. They brought me downstairs. I said, I want to go to jail where I can get a trial. They said fine, we'll take you in the police car or your parents' car.

I got in my parents' car and was driven back to south oaks, where I was put on the locked ward. I remember another inmate threatening me with rape and that I was frightened. Eventually, I was put back on the less severe ward. I tried to get out in a legal way but never had a hearing. Eventually, my friend paid a psychiatrist to call the hospital to inquire into my case. I was released within a few days.

I stayed on lithium for about 8 years. It worked okay. I did college and jobs

and all that. I excelled.

Then I went off drugs and got pregnant (in 1990). I toughed it out through mania and depression and then my system settled down. I had two children and stayed off psych drugs for 9 years or so.

But at that point, I had severe symptoms and none of the alternative treatments seemed to help (1999). I accepted lithium in a severe depression. Unfortunately, when I had even worse symptoms from being on the wrong amount of lithium, my doc was on vacation. After not sleeping for several days, I went to the county clinic with my kids (I was on Medicaid and had little medical choice.)

They immediately committed me by calling an ambulance and wrapping me in a sheet and placing me upside down so I couldn't breathe. Meanwhile, they call the Child Protective Service which took my kids, located my (hostile) sister and placed my kids into her care. They also encouraged her to assume custody of my kids without my consent or knowledge which she did.

I was put in a locked waiting room and I waited for hours. Finally I knocked on the doctor's door (he wasn't in) alot. The orderlies(MHAs) came running. Six crowded into a little exam room. THEY showed me the syringe and the pills. I took the pills. Still they pushed me into the back room and put me on a blue plastic mattress. Then they strapped my hands and feet down. They gave me an injection.

I asked the nurse. What do I do? She said, you'd better sleep.

I did.

I woke up in a different hospital. That was CDPC (Capital District Psych Center) and this was Albany Med Center (E2 ward). I was given alot of seroquel which I began to refuse. They took me to a hearing, at which the lawyer for their side said, among other things, "How many times HAVE you been raped, Miss Nichols?" I replied " well, what do you call it when a guy refuses to use a condom?" The judge said I was sane and released me.

Oddly, I have been raped but it's no one's business. I was just trying to show I can keep my cool. So I lied.

Anyhow. I asked for my meds so I could titrate down my dosage. But no luck -- they said they wouldn't give me any since I was leaving against medical advice.

I went to the social service office the next day and demanded to get my kids back. They were frightened as they felt I'd escaped from a mental hospital. They called the cops. They brought me back to the hospital.

My lawyer said "Now, they will throw the book at you..." and indeed, the mandated Haldol and Lithium together.

Eventually, 2.5 months later, I was released. I remember a doctor coming to my house for a follow-up visit. They counted my haldol pills and made me take one in front of them. They told me I should see the local psychiatrist at the county clinic or else I might not get my kids back. But I had an opportunity to see a Dr. at Mt. Sinai/NYU in NYC who did not like Haldol. It was the best thing I could have done medically.

They (Albany Medical Center discharge planners) wanted to place me in mental health supervised housing but I said I wanted to go back to my own apt. They scoffed at the idea that I had an apt. but I did and I went there.

I was shaken and had nightmares about restraint and forced drugging. However, within 3 weeks, I was working as a substitute teacher. A few weeks after that I got a job running a program for junior high school students on suspension. A month after that I won in court and my kids were returned for good. Nonetheless I had to consent to have a social worker visit my apt. every month.

I also had to attend a hearing to have my name expunged from the child abuse and neglect list. I had letters from supporters all over the state to back me up and I won.

I am so lucky that what could have been my life trapped in mental health services, unemployment, lack of belief in myself, loss of my children and absolute despair was avoided. This is mainly because I have had people in my life who have supported me and helped me get a lawyer when I needed it and who helped me keep my apartment. These critical supports kept the system from destroying my life.

What has healed me has been being gentle with myself and giving myself time off from overstimulation. I can only handle so much sensory overload before I feel bad. I live caffeine free and use herbs when I need to. I also use epilepsy medication which is really helpful.

I also have had spiritual help: my spiritual experiences have helped me grow strong and centered. They have taught me to calm myself using beauty and nature as my medicine.

I truly believe that there are gifts within the differences this culture finds it

so difficult to accomodate.

I am completely grateful for my uniqueness.

May we honor the sacred within each of us within the practice of medicine.

Where there is coercion and disrespect, there is no medicine.

--Grace Nichols 3/10/06

I got elated after my first baby in 1970. After 6 weeks at home breastfeeding they put me in a mental hospital. There I was made mentally ill by Haldol and Largactil. I was then deeply depressed and even forgot about my baby. I had the shakes, lockjaw and a terrible thirst and drooling. I couldn't even walk.

I had suffered low self esteem growing up. This continued in marriage though I had some good years. I compared negatively with other women when they achieved something. I thought I couldn't do that. So I have few skills. Psychiatry insured that I was a failure. My husband carried me but did not question the negative effect of drugs. Negativity causes depression.

I was in the mental hospital over 75 times almost always involuntary because I was elated. Nearly always out of frustration, because of not been able to cope at home alone, without enough support. I was over dependant on my husband and after we seperated I became dependent on friends.

I find that psychiatry does not address the basic problems but with the forceful administration of neuroleptic drugs exarcebates the condition.

So that now at 62 years old, having two adult sons, life has sliped by because I lived in the past. Psychiatry cures nobody. I am in the locked up hospital again as I write this feeling insecure, helpless and hopeless one more time.

I feel I am finished and I can't go on.

Yours sincerely,

Helena O' Donovan (King)

Although my story took place in 1966, in New York state, the exact same things can happen to people today, with the exception of the fact that the length of involuntary commitments are shorter.

I am a person who originally entered a mental hospital voluntarily, seeking help for a severe depression. After several months of going in and out of mental hospitals, where basically the only "treatment" was drugs and locked doors, I was told that I was being committed, against my will, to a state hospital.

These days I'd probably be able to get a lawyer and a court hearing, which weren't available then, but from my advocacy work I know that most of these court hearings are shams, because the lawyer doesn't vigorously represent his or her client's expressed wishes, but quite often instead pretty much goes along with what the psychiatrist says the person "needs." Most involuntary commitment hearings last about fifteen minutes!

I spent sixty days in a state hospital, which was grim and depressing. I was forced to take drugs against my will. I was terrified that I would be locked in seclusion or put in restraints, things that I saw happen to other people who in any way created a "problem" for the staff. No one took a personal interest in me or treated me like an individual. We were herded everywhere in groups. We seldom got outside in the fresh air. The food was basically inedible, and I gained an enormous amount of weight because I pretty much lived on bread and margarine (and because the drugs have weight gain as a side effect).

When I got out of the hospital I felt hopeless. Even though I was only twenty one years old, I felt like my life was over. It was only because I got involved in the self-help and advocacy movement that I discovered that it was possible to rebuild my life.

Some years after my hospitalization, I had another experience with suicidal depression, but I was able to spend time in a non-medical crisis facility that was set up as an alternative to hospitals. Here, everything was different. I was respected as an individual and allowed to decide what I needed, instead of it being assumed that I had lost all powers of decision. There were very few rules, and lots of individual attention. There were always people to talk to. The operating philosophy was that everyone would get better, and that the crisis was just a temporary situation. Drugs were not used. The crisis resolved itself in less than two weeks, and I was able to resume my normal life.

Although I still become depressed from time to time, I have learned good self-care skills and am able to get through hard times with the support of peers. I believe that supportive self-help alternatives must be available for every person who wants them.

Judi Chamberlin
Arlington, MA, USA
May 2006

Lina Ciuksiene (51, diagnosed with scizophrenia since 1983, survivor, no medication for 6 years)

1 CASE: the right on access to information according Lithuanian Law on Mental Health Care (Chapter IV, Article 15)

1st attempt (March, 2001) to get information: such a psychological pressure was used by two psychiatrists that it made an impression that I was the first and the only one person in Lithuania who wanted to get information in official way. The answer was given in written form in 16 days (instead 3 days that Law requires).

2nd attempt (September, October, 2003) – such a long time was needed to stabilise emotions and try once more. Outpatient psychological and psychiatric examination was carried out and diagnosis was changed.

3rd attempt (February, 2003) – a letter with six questions was sent but instead answers a suggestion for “in-patient psychiatric examination in order to get information” was given.

4th attempt (September, 2003) – a letter with 6 questions repeated and the suggestion for psychiatric examination in the hospital repeated once more.

5th attempt (November, 2003) – a letter with a remark that “information requested is:” on past health state but not current health condition – so there is no meaning for psychiatric examination in the hospital. And the suggestion for hospitalisation can be considered as discrimination as the Law doesn’t require such way to get personal information”. An answer signed by 3 leading psychiatrists was given where attempts to get information were described as “you were consulted and psychiatric help was suggested but you have refused”.

No one answer to 6 questions was given!

2 CASE: hospitalisation without patient agreement:

I was hospitalised in acute department in psychiatric hospital for 8 days (instead 48 hours that the Law requires) without my agreement and court permission.

ANONYMOUS CASES:

1 CASE: a pair (woman 21 and man 61 years old: both legally incapable) in social care institution were allowed to live together and priest sanctified their wedding rings. Few days before childbirth they both were taken to the state psychiatric hospital (without symptoms of acute health state) and psychiatrists were asked to hospitalise them in order for man (not legal – but husband!) to visit his woman till the childbirth – so psychiatrists in both: men and women departments did. On fourth day after childbirth the personnel of social care institution came and separated all 3 persons: they took woman to the same institution but husband they gave to another institution and the newborn child was taken to children care house – in order no more children to appear.

A CASE OF SOCIAL ADVERTISEMENT

A stigmatising and discriminatory saying “a loosened screw” was taken as keystone for advertising campaign of project on employment of mentally ill persons. The project was funded by European fund EQUAL that is “fighting discrimination in labour market”. Both social groups with different needs were represented during the project: mentally ill

and those with intellectual disabilities. During 30 second video recording a screw that fell down from the table is shown and everybody in the office scream and climb on the tables in fear of the screw. Blue paper placards in the streets portray a large number of various screws and maintain that “It is silly to be afraid of loosened screw – it may happen to you also. 60% of mentally ill can work with full competence”.

In short after appearance of advertisement “It is silly to be afraid of loosened screw” a mini – inquiry was made: 57 persons (mentally ill and others) were asked to express their opinion about the advertisement of “loosened screw”. Two thirds of participants qualified negatively this saying: “cruel characterization in widely spread meaning of foolishness; painful; outrageous; they give us a raspberry – what to do – we clean splits and go further; yes – I am ill: but who enabled them to put indignities and mock on me and my disability?; who asked me what I think about this advertisement; they do not care to provide us a human view; does derisive and humiliating saying “a loosened screw” can advocate for image of full-fledged employees?; this saying associates with limited possibilities; expression “a loosened screw” contradict itself the proposition used in the advertisement that “60% of mentally ill can work with full competence”.

The organisers of the project explained that: “shall we close our eyes or not the saying “loosened screw” will exist. So we use it for attracting attention to painful problem of employment of mentally disabled”. So the last question is: does all the means are good for purpose to be justified? The Nacism showed the falseness of such an attitude.

The board of Lithuanian Fellowship of Mental Health Care Users consider that usage of stigmatising saying “a loosened screw” is moulding discriminatory opinion in labour market as is based on making joke of mental disorder.

The view of “loosened screw” transform mentally ill persons into stuff without human shape thus illustrating well the reality of mentally ill: we are invisible in the society.

** As matters stands now (and my story of attempts to get information shows it very well) query is: does mental illness is illness or a crime? The answer is offered that it is more a crime than an illness: psychiatry is the only branch of medicine where the issue of human rights is brought to the fore. The article on access to information speaks about danger to “the interests of third persons” or “information can cause danger to patients health and life”. Psychiatrist is to decide what amount of information to give to the patient while criminals have right to all process materials. Women criminals if they give birth to a child in the prison they have possibility to nurture them till one year under the care of personell – that is impossible at all for mentally ill in social care institutions (even cat breeders recommend little kittens to be taken from mother cats at the age of 8 weeks – but human child at the case of mental illness is taken away at once: mothers pain and protest is suppressed by medication).

According Lithuanian laws mentally ill persons become legally incapable at the moment of coming to the court but not after the court decision. There are no mandatory requirement to get opinion of mentally ill on the suitability of the candidate as caregiver. And nobody in the court question the opinion of psychiatrist when involuntary treatment / hospitalization or legal incapacity / disability cases are sued to court. And judge never asks for the presence of the patient here in Lithuania. The fact of presence of special law

– Lithuanian Law of Mental Health Care exclude social group of mentally ill from the society.

And what possibilities for mentally ill persons are to protect ones rights if a lawyer was suggested to pass psychiatric examination when he asked for medical information of his client. He returned to his client and refused from the case as he said:”nothing can be done”...

My first hospitalization is in 1970 and I was 17 years old. I voluntarily go to hospital and in the open ward and I had never commit a suicide.

In these days there was no item of voluntary hospitalization in mental health law but officially voluntary hospitalization was regarded same as hospitalization in not mental hospitals.

One day the doctor told me that there was a good injection for me and he gave me ECT with anesthesia but without relaxation. Peers taught me that it was ECT. The doctor told a lie and my parent gave him the consent.

After few times of ECT I fallen down at the breakfast table and the doctor stopped ECT.

Even in 70's it was a rare case to give ECT for teenagers. The doctor is famous to love ECT recently I have heard.

In Japan all users of psychiatry are under the family guardianship without any legal procedure.¹ It is in Mental Health Law and it is called "Hogosya" which in general means parents of children. So in fact users are treated and regarded alike children.

(Law Related to Mental Health and Welfare of the Person with Mental Disorder Chapter 5 Section 1)

http://www.imhpj.org/search/Law_realted_to_Mental_Health_2000.pdf

Generally speaking because the government does not take the responsibility of social security or welfare, families must to take the responsibility to pwd welfare.

There are many cases that families gave consents to hospitalization or ECTs in Japan without our own consents. It is not illegal in Japan.

In this decade ECTs have revived and there are many not-modified ECTs in Japan and many cases are without informed consent of patients only with consents with families. There are many patients who do not know that they are ECTs and doctors told them that they gave only injections.

Mari

¹ Correction: I made a mistake. There is the legal procedure of family guardianship but almost of all are automatically decided and there is no exam whether users are competent or not.

All users not only in-patients but also outpatients should have "Hogosha" in MHL.

15th May 2006

I'm sending you this video in Italian so that you might acknowledge the conditions in which psychiatric prisoners live in Italian psychiatric forensic facilities. This video was recorded from national TV (Rai 3) and as far as I know it was shown only once on TV in 2002. I've got hold of a tape recording of it and converted it in DivX format. So it should play on any computer and most DVD players.

The psychiatric prison in which this documentary was filmed is called OPG Aversa, and it has a website also: www.opgaversa.it

I've spend a long time in two facilities very similar to the one depicted in this video — almost 2 years. One of them was even more decadent because it was an old castle converted into «criminal lunatics asylum» during the fascist period (OPG Montelupo Fiorentino: www.opgmontelupo.it).

The dialogues are very interesting but I can't translate them all. The inmates are complaining to the cameraman that they are hostages, drugged and tortured, that restraint (5 points restraint in Italy as you can gather from the video!) is used as a punishment system, that the prison guards beat them up regularly, and that they have been reduced to slaves with no hopes of ever leaving the facility.

There is a scene where the prison guards are throwing cigarettes to the prisoners, literally the guard is shouting "Fags for the donkeys! Come donkeys, here are the fags!"

The young man who sleeps inside the mattress cover is called Massimo (Massimo Veneziano from what I gathered from inmates) and he is locked isolated into that small room since 8 years because he poked an inmate's eyes. He was arrested for car-theft and at the time of the video production he was there since 10 years. There is a scene where he writes goodbye on the glass using his stool as a marker.

I was locked in a similar room for 4 months and a half. The metal bed is bolted to the floor, and you are given only a mattress, a blanket in winter and your pants. The door has 3 layers of glass to insulate sound, and for this reason we call it "the aquarium". The light-switch is outside the cell and only the guards can switch it on/off. No hot water in the cell.

There are 5 such psychiatric forensic prisons in Italy (Montelupo Fiorentino, Aversa, Castiglione delle Stiviere, Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto, Sant'Eframio) only one of them has no bars and guards (Castiglione delle Stiviere), the others are like the one depicted in this video. If it wasn't for the fact that they give lots of drugs you wouldn't think that it's a hospital, yet is called a hospital.

My experience in similar facilities has left an undeletable scar of sufferance in my soul, and this is the reason why I am always sad and unable to cope with life. I hope that such places will be locked down in the future and that they will never exist again.

Even though I am a free person now, I'll never cease to fight for the people who are still there, in those horrible places!

I am often scared that the government will send back to these prisons if I carry on with my campaigns, but what is the true value of courage if not facing fear? I pray that I'll never end up there again because I could not bare it a second time.

Never cease fighting for freedom!

Tristano Ajmone
President OISM (www.oism.info)

Via Domenico Cimarosa, 95
10154 — Torino — Italy