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NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH PLAN: AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLEMENT PSYCHOEDUCATION IN PORTUGAL?

M. Xavier, M. Goncalves-Pereira, J. Caldas de Almeida

Dep Mental Health, Faculdade de Ciências Médicas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal

It is well known that due to deinstitutionalization, faster discharge from wards and insufficient community resources, direct contact of the severe mentally ill patients with their families has increased a lot in the last years.

In the last two decades, mental health services across Europe developed a diversified offer of programmes, including psychoeducation and family interventions, in order to ensure an effective response to the different care needs.

In Portugal, the lack of planning and consistent support in the improvement of mental health services means that the country is lagging behind significantly in this field in relation to other European countries.

Concerning the specific subject of psychoeducation and family interventions for psychotic patients and their families, its true that treatment in Portugal seldom comport with the best scientific evidence, but so far there has been no pressure on the services to change this oddly situation.

The new National Mental Health Plan, launched in 2008, sets that i. People with mental disorders should be involved and participate in the planning and development of the services they benefit from, and that ii. Family members of the mentally ill should be considered as important partners in care provision, and encouraged to participate in this provision and to receive the necessary training and education.

Based on these principles, the Mental Health Plan may be a critical opportunity to implement psychoeducation and family interventions in Portugal. The authors address this issue, discussing also the potential role of new models of contracting, financing, accounting and monitoring.