

## EPP0968

## Family Members' Experiences in a Psychiatric Hospital During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for Family-Centered Work in Mental Health Systems

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doi: 10.1192/j.eurpsy.2023.1247

**Introduction:** Restricted visitations of family members of persons with mental illness in psychiatric hospitals which may occur during times of public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic can have potential adverse consequences on the family members and on their ability to fulfill the caregiving role. Therefore, mental health professionals may encounter difficulties implementing a family centered-care model during such periods.

**Objectives:** Due to the limited knowledge about the effects of the restrictions during the pandemic a study was conducted in Israel. It examined the difficulties which family members experienced as a result of the restricted visitations and the effects of the restrictions on advancing a family-centered care model.

**Methods:** A semi-structured questionnaire was distributed via digital means to 75 family members who had a family member who was hospitalized in psychiatric hospitals during the pandemic.

**Results:** The findings indicate that family members had limited opportunities in the following areas during the COVID-19 area: Developing relationships with the professional staff, being involved in the therapeutic process during the hospitalization, communicating with the hospitalized family member, and receiving help for themselves.

**Conclusions:** Mental health professionals in psychiatric hospitals should adapt family-centric procedures to circumvent restrictions on physical presence and maintain the involvement of family members during psychiatric hospitalization.

**Disclosure of Interest:** None Declared

## COVID-19 and related topics 09

## EPP0971

## Substance use among people with severe mental illness during the COVID-19 pandemic and earthquakes: the role of community-based treatment

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doi: 10.1192/j.eurpsy.2023.1248

**Introduction:** The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted mental healthcare delivery in many countries. The restricted access to psychiatric services and double disasters (pandemic and earthquakes) coincided in Croatia, potentially placing people with severe mental illness (SMI) in a very vulnerable position.

**Objectives:** The aim of this study was to examine the changes in substance use in people with SMI in the first and the second COVID-19 wave and co-occurring earthquakes. The secondary aim was to explore whether the type of treatment (community mental health teams (CMHT) vs. treatment as usual) influenced those changes.

**Methods:** This study was nested within the RECOVER-E project (LaRge-scalE implementation of COmmunity based mental health care for people with seVere and Enduring mental ill health in EuRopE, Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, grant agreement No 779362). The study involved 90 participants with SMI assessed at two time points: in May/June 2020 (during the first COVID-19 wave and after Zagreb earthquake) and in December 2020/January 2021 (during the second COVID-19 wave and after Petrinja earthquake). The changes in the use of psychoactive substances (alcohol, cannabis, other drugs, sedatives) were assessed using self-reported survey.

**Results:** The increase in tobacco smoking behavior and the use of sedatives was observed in both COVID-19 waves in people with SMI. No increase was reported in cannabis and other drugs use, while less than 5% of participants reported increase in alcohol consumption. Not receiving CMHT service predicted the increase in sedative use.

**Conclusions:** Ensuring accessible mental health care provided by CMHT is recommended for counteracting the negative effect of external stressors (such as pandemic and co-occurring earthquakes) on the increased substance use among people with SMI.

**Disclosure of Interest:** S. Levaj Grant / Research support from: Project RECOVER-E - European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme; Grant Agreement No 779362., S. Medved Grant / Research support from: Project RECOVER-E - European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme; Grant Agreement No 779362., J. Gerlach: None Declared, L. Shields-Zeeman Grant / Research support from: Project RECOVER-E - European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme; Grant Agreement No 779362., F. Bolinski Grant / Research support from: Project RECOVER-E - European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme; Grant Agreement No 779362., Z. Bradaš Grant / Research support from: Project RECOVER-E - European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme; Grant Agreement No 779362., Z. Madžarac Grant / Research support from: Project RECOVER-E - European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme; Grant Agreement No 779362., I. Rojnić Palavra: None Declared, M. Rojnić Kuzman Grant / Research support from: Project RECOVER-E - European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme; Grant Agreement No 779362.