

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY PSYCHIATRIC NURSE IN MALTA

Pierre Galea

Abstract

Community Mental Health services in Europe, and other major countries like Australia, Canada and U.S.A. rely almost entirely on psychiatric nurses for them to function properly. Community psychiatric nurses undertake sophisticated and exceptional clinical interventions, which most often remain unrecognized by service developers, policy makers and those in managerial positions.

Locally, the development of community mental health has been going on since the birth of the pilot project, the development of the outreach team and more recently, a number of mental health clinics sprouting in different localities on the island. At the core of these services, the role of the psychiatric nurse remains fundamental to their function.

This research study aimed to investigate the role of the community psychiatric nurse in Malta, within these teams. The purpose was to find out the perceptions CPNs have about their role, and to identify any difficulties they are experiencing in the ever going evolvement of the community mental health services.

The findings indicate that community psychiatric nurses in Malta are working effectively as dedicated professionals. They have managed to master their new role with keenness and enthusiasm, using inbred psychiatric nursing practices evident in the therapeutic relationship, assessment and management of risk and the human attributes of individuals who are compassionate, understanding and proficient.

A case study methodology was used with a sample of 5 participants, using semi-structured interviews and analysed by thematic analysis. The study is hoped to portray how the role of the community psychiatric nurse evolved in the Maltese context.