

Super Difficult Patients with Mental Illness: Homelessness, Marontology and John Doe Syndrome

Doentes Super Difíceis com Doença Mental: Sem-abrigo, Marontologia e Síndrome do Zé Ninguém

Keywords: Community Psychiatry; Europe; Homeless

Palavras-chave: Europa; Pessoas em Situação de Rua; Psiquiatria Comunitária

Dear Editor, we recently read in your journal a letter to editor¹ commenting a previous article of ours, dedicated to difficult and super difficult patients with mental illness.² Our colleagues described the success of their anecdotal experience abroad, when community psychiatry has not lived up to its expectations in the western world and is struggling, and continues to struggle worldwide.

It is not a secret, and we deal with it every day at our clinical practice at Hospital Júlio de Matos, Centro Hospitalar Psiquiátrico de Lisboa, in Portugal. How can a multi-disciplinary team do a psychiatric home visits in the community when the patient has no home? The most severe mentally ill patients are living on the streets. They have no home! The patients with the greatest burden of mental illness are homeless. Many are, indeed, homeless, nameless and helpless, suffering from the John Doe syndrome,³ being completely vulnerable in the streets of our cities, and suffering not only from schizophrenia, but also other undis-

closed psychosis (organic, etc.). They often lack appropriate health care from community psychiatry. They are, instead, waiting to become object of marontology,⁴ an unborn medical specialty recently proposed in a previous issue of this journal. Of course, we are living dystopian times, with many doubts. But at least we should be certain of one thing: community mental health services are neither the panacea nor the magical solution to the problem of our super 'difficult' patients with severe mental illness. For further reading, please allow us to recommend all the books, written in the last decades, by Edwin Fuller Torrey. Maybe readers should start with *American psychosis: how the federal government destroyed the mental illness treatment system*.⁵ This book exposes, in a very elegant way, all the mistakes done in the United States of America, that we should be avoiding, here and now, in the European Union, whenever treating our patients with severe psychiatric disorders.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is deeply grateful to Edwin Fuller Torrey at the Treatment Advocacy Center, the Research of the Stanley Medical Research Institute and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and António Bento at Serviço de Psiquiatria Geral e Transcultural, Hospital Júlio de Matos, Centro Hospitalar Psiquiátrico, for being an endless source of inspiration and guidance.

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João GAMA MARQUES✉^{1,2}

1. Serviço de Psiquiatria Geral e Transcultural. Hospital Júlio de Matos. Centro Hospitalar Psiquiátrico de Lisboa. Lisboa. Portugal.

2. Clínica Universitária de Psiquiatria e Psicologia Médica. Faculdade de Medicina. Universidade de Lisboa. Lisboa. Portugal.

Autor correspondente: João Gama Marques. joagamarques@gmail.com

Recebido: 02 de fevereiro de 2021 - Aceite: 03 de fevereiro de 2021 - Online issue published: 01 de abril de 2021

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<https://doi.org/10.20344/amp.15868>

