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Life skills training - how to live, when living is hard (Greek dimension)

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Introduction

Life skills are defined as the necessary skills for independent life in a chosen environment. Problems with life skills and lack of satisfaction in everyday life roles lead to occupational isolation and occupational deprivation of persons with mental illness. Successful adaptation, meaningful integration and implementation of life skills training programme enables individual for maximal independent participation in all occupational roles of activities of daily living on healthy, meaningful and productive way (WHO, 2003).

This paper presents a multidimensional study on how to develop Life Skills Training Workshops (LSTW) based on the international cooperation between in-patient clinic of the psychiatric hospital in Greece and NGO in Croatia.

Objectives

Main objective of this study is to explore whether LST workshops impact on: promotion of positive life style, maintaining and increasing the level of functional independence, prevention of occupational difficulties, psychological support, and support for families and carers of persons experiencing psychosis or bipolar disorder.

Methods

In order to explore the effectiveness of LSTW, three groups of mental health service users are invited to participate in an 18 months follow up. In every country 24-30 participants (male/female, 25-45 years old) with experience of psychotic or bipolar disorder are invited. Intervention group will join the 24 workshops' programme. LSTW will be carried out as group and individual activities focused on development, modification and/or maintaining specific skills. The methodology will use pre- and post-evaluation. Data analysis will be done using SPSS.

Results

The LSTW is still in progress although the design of the methodology has been completed. In Greece there was a strong alliance of the occupational therapist with the psychologist and the psychiatrists that has already enhanced the culture in the clinic incorporating an occupational perspective to the everyday practice.

Contribution to the practice/evidence of occupational therapy

The central aspect of the LSTW is to highlight how occupational perspective can inform the development and implementation of group and individual programmes to meet the individual needs of the persons after their discharge from mental health hospital and minimize the negative impact of mental health conditions in their every day life in the community.