

Profiling Mental Health Services in Portugal: Seven Years After the Reform

P. Mateus¹, A. Carvalho¹, M. Xavier²

¹National Programme for Mental Health, Health Directorate General, Lisbon, Portugal ; ²Department of Mental Health, NOVA Medical School, Lisbon, Portugal

1. Introduction

Despite recent improvements in the Portuguese mental health services (MHS), the low priority given for a long time to mental health within the general context of the country's health services, illustrated by inadequacies in planning and funding models, led to a significant delay in the improvement of MHS, when compared to other European countries.

2. Objectives

To compare the profile of MHS in Portugal 7 years after the launching of the National Mental Health Plan in the following dimensions: capacity (adults and child/adolescents), human resources and use of services (discharges, appointments, day hospital).

3. Methods

A full evaluation was conducted by the National Mental Health Programme, under the auspices of the General Directorate of Health, by means of a cross-sectional evaluation of national data.

4. Results

Comparing the situation between 2005 and 2012, the most significant aspect is the reduction of the total number of beds in public MHS, mainly due to the elimination of 40% of beds in the decommissioned psychiatric hospitals. Regarding human resources, there was decrease in the number of psychiatrists working in public MHS. There was a significant increase in the number of outpatient appointments, both in child psychiatry (+30%) and adult psychiatry (+22%).

5. Conclusion

Tough the development of new MHS in general hospitals, some geographic areas are still not covered by these services, namely in the southern region of the country. There is also a significant scarcity of other professionals, which prevents the improvement of multidisciplinary and comprehensive work.