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The Future of Research in Mental Health in Europe: the Opinions of National Associations of Users and Carers

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Introduction: Discontent towards our profession is increasingly reported by patients with mental disorders and their relatives. Criticisms by patients are mainly related to the existing divergences between the goals of clinicians and those of users and carers. Recent arguments suggest that opinions of people who use mental health services are fundamental to set priorities in mental health research field.

Objectives: Within the ROAMER project funded by the European Commission, we promoted an online survey involving European associations of users and carers in order to identify their opinions on the future of mental health research.

Aims: To describe opinions towards mental health research of European National associations of users and carers.

Methods: An online survey was conducted with national associations/organizations of users and carers in the 27 countries of the European Union.

Results: Twenty-three associations/organizations of users and carers out of the 44 contacted returned the questionnaire (response rate: 52.3%). Users and carers clearly affirmed that themes related to social psychiatry, such as stigma, rehabilitation and social inclusion, quality of mental health services, and development of new psychological treatment for mental disorders are perceived as priority for future research.

Conclusions: These results show that service users' views are progressively being considered in the process of developing public health recommendations and in research protocols, because the direct involvement of different categories of stakeholders can lead to a 'better' quality of health research.

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