KARUS
THE COMFORT-CONTEXT ROOM
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A humane alternative and approach for the isolation room to manage situations of severe psychic distress and despair
 CONSTRAINT: AN ACTUAL PROBLEM

- One of the predominant goals in (Belgian and European) mental health is the diminishing of constraint and freedom restricting measures
- Inspection round in mental health care institutions (2016): in a first step focusing on the use of restraint on children and youth
- Advisory report of the Belgian Superior Health Council (2016) and the Report of CPT (2012, European Committee for the Prevention of Torture an Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment): both focusing on the use of restraint in psychiatric institutions
SOME ‘NUMBERS’?

- Lack of randomized controled trials
- For once: numbers not so ‘popular’
- Clearly great differences between countries and between different institutions
- Implication: it depends on mentality, leadership, priorities and culture in an institution
APPROACH: NEED FOR DIFFERENTIATION

- According to target group: psychosis, addiction, double diagnosis, mental disability, mood and anxiety disorders, ...
- According to age
- According to the professional environment: institution, psychiatric hospital, day center, ...
MOOD AND ANXIETY DISORDERS

- Suicidal tendencies
- Anxiety
- Obsessive thoughts and behavior
- Confusion
- Tension, high arousal
- Self-harming behavior
- Fugues
- …
GENERAL GOALS OF THE DEPARTMENT

- Reduce the use of constraining measures to zero
- Focus on proximity and cooperation with the patient as well as his context (holding environment)
- Eliminate the isolation room by transforming it into a comfort-context room
APPROACH: ‘NEGATIVE’ FORMULATION

- If you don’t have an isolation room, you can’t use one
- No necessary need for restraining measures in the handling of current situations of psychic need and distress
- Possible problem: fugues
APPROACH: POSITIVE FORMULATION

- Approach a human being as you want to be approached yourself in a situation of psychic need and despair
- Be present and available (without being intrusive) in a holding environment
A COMFORT-CONTEXT ROOM

= a comfort room with an adjacent context room
COMFORT ROOM

- a quiet place
- with an open door
- in modern accommodation
- conform safety measures (suicide-proof)
- with an open view
- on a small garden (accessible via the context room)
- with the possibility to make connection with modern media (e.g. own music files).
CONTEXT ROOM

- via an open passage
- in direct connection with the comfort room
- with an infrastructural accommodation to stay for the day and the night (bed, seat, chair, table, connection to the internet, …).
- creating an atmosphere of nearness: a holding and sustaining environment, but is not intrusive
The person in psychic need may appeal for help, but can also choose to stay alone with someone in the proximity.

Together with the patient there is reflected whom the person in the context room may be (his/her partner, a good friend, a nurse, … ).

This is attuned with the partner, family member, the team, etc. as well.
RECOMMANDATIONS - INSPECTION

- The comfort-context room is going further than the legally formulated necessities.
- It integrates also some recommendations on:
  - General management of freedom restricting measures: reducing constraint and reducing isolations rooms
  - Adapted procedures
  - Including the context
  - Adapted means and infrastructure
CONFORM THE ‘PANEL ‘– PRINCIPLES OF THE UNFPA (UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND)

- Participation (of all relevant persons)
- Accountability
- Non discriminatory
- Empowerment
- Legality
**Sanitary**

**Comfort room**

with a big window, modern furniture and multi-media applications

(Former isolation room)

**Hall**

**Open door system**

**Passage to the context-room**

**Context room**

with modern accommodation and adapted to be also a family room. With access to a (small) outside private garden.

**Private garden**
Isolation room before ‘make-over’ into comfort-room.
Inspiring photo’s - what it could be: comfort room with modern, suicide-proof furniture
Inspiring photo’s - what it could be: comfort room with glass-box window
Time-out room before ‘make-over’ into context-room
Inspiring photo’s - what it could be: context room with access to a small private garden
BASICS OF GOOD CARE

- Conform with human rights
- Each individual has unique needs and expectations
- An empathic attitude to the patient, the family and the network
- Respect and dignity
- Balance between freedom of choice and security
- Maintaining a constructive relationship between the person asking for help and the person giving help
PART OF AN INTEGRATED PLAN

- Ethical point of view: changing mentality and emphasizing an individual approach
- Infrastructural innovation, facilitating a more human approach
- Less restricting living rules in institutions (de-escalating effect)
- Psycho-education of team members
- Individual signalisation plan
- Working together with the context
FURTHER PURPOSES

- Evaluation of the concept
- trying out the concept in the handling of crisis situations for even more ‘severe’ target groups (psychosis, personality disorder).
- Create new ‘standards’ (sustained by the government) in the handling of situations of psychic distress and despair
- Spread as good practice in Belgium and abroad.
CONFORM PROF VALUES

- Minimal comfort
- Privacy: the combination of the two rooms is separated from direct contact with the rest of the department
- Security: safety- and suicide-proof
- Anti-loneliness: always someone available
- Non stigmatising solutions
CONFORM PROF VALUES (2)

- Inter generational: the context room creates the possibility for partners, parents (for children), grown up children (for parents) and team members to assist (and even overnight) in times of high psychic need.
- Respect: respectful handling in severe crisis situations.
- Flexibility: differentiation in nearness and amount of sustainment and privacy. Availability of modern media. The mini-garden may help in coping with a situation of psychic distress, despair, anxiety.
CONFORM PROF CRITERIA

- Interdisciplinarity: collaboration of psychiatrists, psychologists and nurses.
- ‘Good practice’ for the government in its search for reducing isolation and freedom restricting measures.
- Copyable by other hospitals and institutions for the same and other target groups and in other organizations who search for alternatives to handle crisis situations.
no solitary ‘isolating’ room
without context room
WEBSITE (INSPECTION, ADVICES, …)

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