

## A Good Title...

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The title of the Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Mental Health expresses a philosophy of work with people who suffer from chronic diseases and/or lasting impairments and from a consequent disability to perform in some of the social and personal roles sanctioned by the cultural setting in which they live. The title does this in several ways.

First, it mentions both mental health and rehabilitation thus presenting the notion that the striving to achieve the state of mental health and the action to rehabilitate people with mental illness are two related but different areas of work. Mental health can be seen as a dimension of human existence best defined as a state of equilibrium within oneself and between oneself and others. This state of equilibrium can co-exist with illness and impairment: it will in fact help those concerned to live with the illness and cope with impairments. It presupposes an awareness of one's capacities, of the quality of functioning in different personal and social roles and of the harmony of one's value system with that of society. Mental health can be of good quality in the presence of disease and can be of a poor quality even when no disease is present.

Rehabilitation is a term that describes the process of returning individuals into their community and making them assume roles which they fulfilled before the illness struck them. For persons with a mental disorders rehabilitation often refers to the creation of a place in society which was not present before the illness: many mentally ill are originally from the poorest, least educated layers of society and have no clearly defined position to which they

could return. Some have personality problems which prevented their insertion into the social structures of the community. Some have been excluded from society because of their illness for such a long time that they have to relearn all about it. In such instances it might be better to speak of habilitation, of the creation of a niche in society in which the person will function well, can make a contribution to the development of the community and assesses the quality of his or her life as being acceptable or good. The relevant tasks require both psychological and social interventions: hence the adjective "psychosocial" which often accompanies the word rehabilitation.

More recently in a number of settings the goal of habilitation or rehabilitation is gradually being replaced by the goal of recovery. Recovery refers to the way in which the persons who had a mental illness and might have impairments of function that the illness produced shape their life. Recovery relies on the persons' mental health, the state of an inner equilibrium which allows them to accept their impairments as part of the reality in which they are to live. It therefore makes sense to pursue both goals – the improvement of mental health and the rehabilitation of persons with mental illness, the notion that gave the title to the new Journal.

Second, the title of the Journal invites experts active in either of the two fields – the field of promotion of mental health and the field of rehabilitation after a mental illness to read and contribute to the life of the Journal and thus underlines the need for collaboration between these two groups – and naturally also between them and those engaged in the prevention and treatment of mental illness. The lack of such collaboration in the field of psychiatry has been a major obstacle to its progress. The scarcity of resources and the small numbers of experts in our field requires their collaboration to reach a critical mass of knowledge and energy which can lead to a change and the

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realization of the potential of psychiatry: the Journal's support to this notion and its invitation in this respect is therefore both timely and important.

Third, the Journal is international in scope and ambition but will be composed and led by the Editor and his staff located in India. The number of journals that are organized in this way is small: most of the international publications in the field of psychiatry emanate from highly industrialized countries in Europe and the USA and it is good to see that they are beginning to spring up in the low and middle income countries. The symbolic value of this development is considerable and it is hoped that the example of this Journal will be followed by similar publications in India and the many other countries in the developing world.

Finally, the fact that a journal on rehabilitation - thus a journal which will deal with matters of particular importance to the most severe forms of mental disorders - is emerging from a developing country carries another

message. The low priority given to mental health programmes in the third world led to giving emphasis to the management of acute psychotic states, the treatment of epilepsy and the education of the general practitioners and other primary health care staff about ways of dealing with milder forms of mental disorders that they usually see in their clinics. Rehabilitation of those who suffered from mental disorders seeking and are a way to continue their life despite the impairments which their disease might have produced has been an area of particular neglect. The appearance of the Journal might be a harbinger of a change and of a serious effort to complement previous priorities of mental health care by the introduction of rehabilitative services and long term care for the mentally ill. Such a strategic change assumes particular importance at a time when successes of medicine in general offer an extension of life expectancy to all, including those suffering from chronic illnesses and impairments that follow them.