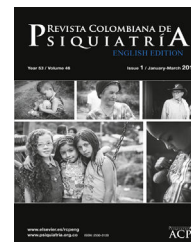




REVISTA COLOMBIANA DE PSIQUIATRÍA

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Editorial

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The Colombian Association of Psychiatry issued the following statement in response to the controversy caused by the televised broadcast of a public affairs programme reporting mistreatment of hospitalised patients in national mental health institutions, and we publish it today as an editorial for our journal.

Bogotá D.C., Colombia, 24 February 2020 COMMUNIQUE TO PUBLIC OPINION:

Following the feature report broadcast by the programme “Séptimo Día” on the Caracol channel on Sunday, 23 February entitled, “Are psychiatric patients in Colombia increasingly vulnerable?”, the Asociación Colombiana de Psiquiatría (ACP) [Colombian Association of Psychiatry] would like to share the following observations.

First of all, we wish to express our solidarity with patients and families affected by the events that occurred in the cases related to the programme. As mental health professionals, we can confirm that there are defined criteria for decision-making on admission to hospital, and institutions must meet a series of requirements in order to receive authorisation. By heeding management protocols designed to ensure that the criteria for hospital admission are met, we can ensure in turn that admissions increasingly take place in an environment of compassionate and patient-centred care. However, despite having contingency plans in place, like any medical procedure, hospitalisation in a Mental Health Unit is not exempt from the occurrence of adverse events, which can affect the patient, the family, and even healthcare staff. Such events are not common, but have a great impact on society, especially for the affected individuals and families, and it is these people we address.

In line with its social, scientific and trade-union work, the ACP calls for greater protection for mental health, which involves patients, the healthcare team, institutions and the media. - We therefore appreciate that the community and families of psychiatric patients make known their concerns regarding care and we stand by them, while at the same time recommending that they go to the appropriate and pertinent places to demand their right to the best mental healthcare. People are admitted to mental health units for treatment of acute conditions or to reduce a risk to the integrity of the individual or of people in their environment. We encourage mental health teams to optimise their work.

While understanding the day-to-day ups and downs, the fact that in psychiatric institutions care is, for the most part, highly dedicated, and how difficult it is to look after our patients, it is also necessary to recognise the failures that can occur and address them. - It is the responsibility of the institutions to optimise care conditions. However, we are aware that this is not an easy task, given the demands of a health system which limits options and prioritises economic elements over the right to health. It is a challenge to demand better conditions. ASOCIACIÓN COLOMBIANA DE PSIQUIATRÍA - ACP Tax ID No.: 860.016.790-0 Affiliated to the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), Member of the Asociación Psiquiátrica de América Latina (APAL) [Latin American Psychiatric Association] Carrera 18 No. 84-87 Oficina 404 - Bogotá, D.C. Colombia Tel.: (+57) (1) 256 1148 – 9277546 www.asociacioncolombianadepsiquiatria.org

We urge the National Government to improve conditions in order to ensure we have an environment conducive to providing our best efforts, and that means applying suitable reforms to the System. Lastly, we appreciate the media looking out for the best care for our patients; being objective, even though they are not necessarily neutral. We also call on the institutions providing the mental health services to carry out continuous monitoring of staff, provide them with the appropriate training and education, adhere to care protocols and safety programmes for patients, and provide a more compassionate service, to mitigate the risk of this type of events occurring.

Resolute in our commitment, we are ready to provide support wherever necessary.

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