

A series of case reports of reintegration of persons with mental illness with their family members

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Abstract

Person with Mental Illness (PWMI) during the course of illness may get separated from their families due to their psychopathology or cognitive distortions. They may forget their identity and address of family, wander away to distant places. Because of illness person may have poor self-care, aggressive behaviour and wandering on roads. These may grab the attention of social workers, NGO's, Police personnel will get them admitted into Mental Health Facility [MHF] for treatment with reception order, get better in course of time. When they improve then real problem arises because after recovery PWMI are not supposed to be kept in MHF. Reunion of PWMI with family is challenging with available resources. It involves many people like doctors, social workers, police and other higher authorities to trace the families. But new technology like Google maps, Aadhar finger print are helping a lot by decreasing the time spent for tracing the families of PWMI. With the help of all these people and technology, family members were traced and reunited with PWMI.

Here we presenting a series of cases where the PWMI who wandered away because of their mental illness, found in our city brought to our MHF through court order and were treated. Their addresses were traced through a team work of doctors, social workers, police and technology and were reintegrated with their families.

Keywords: Reintegration, Mentally ill, Technology, Wandering lunatic.

Introduction

As per Mental Health Care Act 2017, when a Person With Mental Illness [PWMI] gets improved after admission and treatment in the closed ward they are not to be detained in Mental Health Establishment. For PWMI whose family members details are known they can be easily reintegrated and sent home. But the problem arises when PWMI are unidentified or unable to give their address or contact details, either because of language barrier or low education levels.

Reintegration of such patients with their family is a daunting task. Our hospital doctors, nursing staff, social workers, police and legal personnel have been showing proactive and persistent efforts in trying to reintegrate such patients with their families. Collective efforts and recent advances in technology have been helping us immensely in this process.

Institute of Mental Health [IMH]

IMH is a 600 bedded hospital which was established in 1895 in Maharashtra and later shifted to Hyderabad in 1953. The mental health facility provides Out-Patient, In-Patient treatment, ECT, Psychological tests, Psychotherapies, actively involved in academic training of post graduates, nursing and research activities. Beneficiaries to this hospital include patients not only from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh but also from Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu even distant places such as West Bengal. We have separate open and closed wards for patients who get admitted on voluntary and involuntary basis. Patients are generally brought with a reception order from court for closed ward admissions [as per mental health act].

Here we are presenting case reports where such wandered away PWMI were brought to IMH, treated and efforts were made to trace out their family members, ultimately resulting in the reintegration of patient with their family members.

Case Reports

1. Mr. X, a male of unknown age was found on the streets in a dishevelled state, was pelting stones on people and eating from dust-bins was referred to IMH along with court order. Initially he couldn't give his details but did so with treatment. The PG's of our institute were attending a national conference at Lucknow happened to see a missing poster of a person who bore striking resemblance with unknown patient in our hospital. A poster was also displayed with phone numbers, when contacted confirmed about whereabouts of the patient, informed that he got separated from his family 11yrs back. This patient was reunited with family members after a long gap of 11yrs.
2. Mrs. Y, a female patient 30 years old was referred to our hospital with a court order with complaints of abusing people around her, pelting stones on them, disrobing her clothes, showing poor self-care. The patient was found by a journalist and he had shifted her to an NGO. With the help of police and legal professionals she was referred to IMH. After treatment, the patient revealed her address but it could not be traced out and she was subsequently shifted to state home. From state home, our social worker has traced out her family and she was handed over to her family members.

List of patients who were traced and reintegrated with family members from 2018-2019

S. No	IP NO	Gender	Date of admission	Date of discharge	Patients traced by Process	Place of residence
1	197290	Male	17-3-2016	9-1-2018	Traced by Google maps and informed to local police	Orissa
2	204486	Male	7-1-2017	1-10-2018	Pt told his address and informed to local police	Karnataka
3	202684	Female	24-10-2016	21-5-2019	Contacted local police and traced address	Madhya Pradesh
4	222033	Male	24-11-2018	19-3-2019	Google maps, local police	West Bengal
5	206541	Female	25-3-2017	15-3-2019	Google maps	Pune, Maharashtra
6	194420	Male	28-11-2015	9-4-2018	Pt told his address and contacted family members	Maharashtra

Discussion

Mental illness is an important contributor to homelessness and may have further exacerbated and complicated mental and physical disorders. Little initiative, will and support of NGO's, local police, judiciary and government psychiatric facilities, it will be possible to identify, manage and reintegrate the majority of the home less mental illness patients with their family/society.¹ Involving family members in the care of their mentally ill patient improves treatment outcomes.² We found one study similar to present case report in which newer technologies were used in early identification and reintegration of patients with their family members. Family members are important because they help in follow up, adherence to treatment, detecting early signs of relapse, side effects of medications and rehabilitation.³ Early reintegration reduces unnecessary detention of person with mental illness.

Conclusion

In a developing country like India, family plays an important role in treatment engagement and further rehabilitation of patients. Family members will act like a shock absorber and help the patient to recover and readjust. The early reintegration of PWMI is the need of the day as it reduces the hospital stay and burden on psychiatric rehabilitative services.

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Conflict of interest

Nil.

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