

Editorial Άρθρο σύνταξης

Psychiatric specialty training in Greece

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The reform and development of psychiatric services require, in addition to financial resources, reserves in specialized human resources. The role of psychiatrists in this process, and at reducing the consequences of mental morbidity is evident.

Psychiatrists are required to play a multifaceted role as clinicians, as experts in multidisciplinary team environments and as advisors in the recognition of public needs in mental health issues, as teachers and mentors for students and other health professionals, as researchers in order to enrich our knowledge in the scientific field of psychiatry, and as public health specialists in the development of the mental health services system. This multifaceted role requires the continuous education of modern psychiatrists, but above all a broad, substantial and comprehensive training regime in the initial stage of their professional career, that is to say during specialization.¹

Training in Psychiatry, as indeed has happened in all other medical specialties, has evolved considerably in recent decades, both in the content of education due to scientific advances in the fields of neurobiology, cognitive neuroscience, genetics, psychopharmacology, epidemiology and psychiatric nosology, and also because of advances in the educational process itself. Simple apprenticeship next to an experienced clinician, despite its importance in the clinical training of young psychiatrists, is no longer sufficient to meet the increased demands of the modern role of psychiatrists, resulting in the creation of educational programs defined by setting and pursuing minimum, though comprehensive educational objectives.²

This development has created the global need to develop organizations intended to supervise training programs. These organizations have various forms worldwide. In the European Union, the competent supervising body for medical specialties is the UEMS (European Union of Medical Specialities) and particularly in the case of the psychiatric specialty, the European Board of Psychiatry. In the US, the supervising bodies are the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, in the United Kingdom the Royal College of Psychiatrists, in Canada the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, etc.³

In our country, the debate on the need to reform the institutional framework for Psychiatric training has been underway since the mid-90s, with initiatives especially by the Hellenic Psychiatric Association, aiming to raise awareness and concern among psychiatrists while responding to requests from competent central bodies of the state, as well as establishing Panhellenic training programs for psychiatric trainees and continuing education programs.⁴

But what is the situation of the educational map in the country today, what would be the objectives, and how might we proceed? These questions we will try to answer in an effort initiated by Hellenic Psychiatric Association (HPA) and the journal "Psychiatriki" with the publication of thematic articles starting by presenting in the next issue of "Psychiatriki" a comparative study of the training in the specialty of psychiatry at two distinct periods of time (2000 and 2014). These time-frames are of great importance, since the first is a period that in retrospect can be considered as wealthier yet missing robust priorities, while the second, at the peak of the economic crisis, constitutes a difficult environment with limited resources.

Already in the year 2000, psychiatric residency training in our country had major difficulties due to its outdated framework and its fragmentation. All areas in which training is assessed (clinical experience, theoretical training and training in psychotherapy exhibited inadequacies and limited convergence with European golden standards, in the absence of a plan and the implementation of a national education curriculum.^{5,6} Certain university clinics constituted an important exception, though the bulk of the country's future psychiatrists were lagging behind in educational opportunities. Fifteen years later and under the weight of the consequences of the financial crisis, the institutional framework has not yet changed, and the overall situation seems to have worsened dramatically. Nevertheless, there are positive aspects to be evaluated, reinforced, and utilized in order to minimize the adverse effects of the economic crisis and lay sound foundations for the future.

Preparations of a national framework is imperative today more than ever and initiatives to amend the legislation on medical specialties as far as it concerns the field of Psychiatry, could benefit from the evidence, from the willingness of the trainers and trainees concerned, as well as from the elaborated proposals of the Hellenic Psychiatric Association (HPA).

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