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Control Number: 1445

Workshop Type: Issues Workshop

Topic: 63. Presidential Theme: "From Science to Public Policy: Advocacy for Patients & the Profession"

Title: Assisted Outpatient Treatment and Its Role in the Fabric of the Mental Health System

Chair and Presenter Info: **Chairperson:** Daniel Garza, M.D., **Presenter:** Constantine Ioannou, M.D., **Presenter:** Mary Zdanowicz, J.D.

Assisted outpatient treatment is creating new elements in mental health care provision as a result of its unique position to monitor patients, monitor mental health care and improve the safety of clients and the communities in which they live. Outpatient commitment laws across the United States have resulted in significant changes in the fabric of mental health provision. By ensuring that patients have a legal obligation to comply with court sanctioned treatment plans, adherence is improved and clinical deterioration thwarted before the appearance of behaviors that may otherwise lead to dangerousness or hospitalizations. But with the stepwise passage of this legislation in several states, the mechanics for this type of program are not always clear. How does outpatient commitment actually work on a day-to-day basis? What necessary infrastructure must exist in order for such a law to be implemented? The successful implementation of Kendra's Law, the outpatient commitment law of New York State, is now five years old. Results during this time prompted the renewal of the law for another five years in July of 2005. That an outpatient commitment program can place itself in the nexus between the mental health and legal systems, and interface between stakeholders within all of psychiatry, begs the question of which theoretical framework outpatient commitment programs truly fit. How do these paradigms translate into an improved system of monitoring patient's stability in the community and prevention of clinical deterioration? The presenters will examine the various issues that fall within the scope of outpatient commitment statutes and how relationships among stakeholders are affected.

Educational Objective and Agenda: **Assisted Outpatient Treatment and Its Role in The Fabric of The Mental Health Care System**
Educational Objectives:

- Understand the general aims of outpatient commitment laws
- Familiarize oneself with the status of outpatient commitment legislation in various regions of the United States
- Understand how implementation of outpatient commitment legislation in New York State has resulted in benefits to various stakeholders
- Familiarize oneself with the roles outpatient commitment can fit within the infrastructure of public mental health, and other systems as yet unexplored

Schedule:

90 minutes

Agenda:

Mary Zdanowicz will discuss the strategies that the Treatment Advocacy Center (a national nonprofit organization working to eliminate barriers to timely treatment of severe mental

illness) utilizes in helping communities improve and implement outpatient commitment policies. The emotionality of this concept for many falls on individual ideological positions. The differences between people's subjective positions cannot be easily resolved and can lead to endless debate. Therefore, it is important to look to existing empirical evidence to make objective policy decisions about assisted outpatient treatment.

Daniel Garza will provide an overview of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program in New York State and how its implementation has resulted in clinical benefits for consumers of mental health treatment, and how the law itself has withstood various legal challenges. Operationalizing the law into daily operations will be outlined. **Constantine Ioannou** will explore the ramifications of Kendra's Law on the providers mandated to provide care. Some of the positive outcomes noted in clients receiving assisted outpatient treatment may actually reflect improving the fidelity to a model of care offered by the providers of services.

Literature Reference 1: Appelbaum PS: Assessing Kendra's Law: Five Years of Outpatient Commitment in New York. Psychiatric Serv. 2005 July; 56 (7): 791-2

Literature Reference 2: McHugo GJ, Drake RE, Teague GB, Xie, H., Fidelity to Assertive Community Treatment and Client Outcomes in the New Hampshire Dual Diagnosis Study. Psychiatric Serv. 1999 June; 50 (6): 818-24

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