

P01-534

DANGEROUSNESS AND MENTAL DISEASE IN FRANCE: FROM STIGMATIZATION TO PREVENTION PROCESS

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Introduction: Although in close and old connections with psychiatry, dangerousness exceeds psychiatric field because of its transversal feature. By involving a potential attack of others' integrity, dangerousness implies a social dimension.

Objective: The aim was to study social representations of mental disease, which are dominated by the specter of dangerousness and lead to its stigmatization, in order to outline a prevention prospect.

Method: The method was based on a review of literature of main French studies of social representations of mental disorder and mechanisms which lead to its stigmatization.

Results: The representations of psychiatry in general population are homogeneous and consensual, organized around the figure of the « mad », the « mentally ill » and the « depressive people ». Madness and mental disease are associated with the most violent behaviors and the use of psychoactive drugs. Two dimensions appear in the representation of the dangerous individual, one linked to a trained aggressiveness, the second to an impulsive aggressiveness, confirming the validity of the usual distinction between criminological and psychiatric dangerousness. Three main data are at the source of stigmatization : the fear of what is discerned like a threat, the anomaly through the difference which is carried, and the social regulation.

Conclusion: The struggle against mental disease stigmatization can be part of a prevention process allowing through the rehabilitation of the patient in the society the performance of a care which exceeds the simple treatment of the disorder.