



MINISTÉRIO DA SAÚDE

GABINETE DA MINISTRA

Speech of the Excellency the Portuguese Minister of Health

on the occasion of the

XIII ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL CONVENTION

Global Alliance Of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks

“Strengthening of Patient’s voice in the improvement of Mental Health Care”

Lisbon, 22nd of October, 2010



MINISTÉRIO DA SAÚDE

GABINETE DA MINISTRA

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to begin by welcoming all the participants and wish that the convention meets the goals that motivate us all to be here: to find the answers to provide better quality of life to patients and their families.

I also would like to congratulate **GAMIAN – Europe** and **ADEB-Associação de Apoio aos Doentes Depressivos e Bipolares** for choosing Portugal to do this important meeting.

The presence, on this convention of delegates, of 29 Associations, of 25 countries, debating mental health issues demonstrates the recognition of patient's association's importance on mental health politics, decreasing stigma and creating means to integrate patients in community.

Focusing mental health education, combating stigma and the exclusion, as well as reinforce the participation of citizens on defining new orientations and enriching principles of answers on mental health, is the path.

A path that nongovernmental organizations have been doing and that I, as Health Minister and citizen, want to congratulate. Allow me to refer that, recently, the European Union highlighted the fundamental roll of this organizations on the rehabilitation of persons diagnosed with mental illness.

These organizations have, as well, contributed, in a decisive way, to increase the knowledge and the conscience of the community about mental health and, consequently, decrease the stigma associated with psychopathology.

I would like to testify that this is the vision shared by all the health professionals and decision makers that work in order to, consistently, improve the answers on mental health.

To prove it, we elected Mental Health as one of the priorities of National Health Services and since 2007 it has been made a deep and demanding reform on mental health in Portugal.

It is an ambitious reform that aims the redistribution of the existing resources to provide much more efficacy on answers for the multiple necessities of patients. These necessities are not just on clinical area but on the social area as well.

The creation of continued and integrated care on mental health is the concretization of this priority and represents an important contribution to these patients, their families and health professionals.

Trough the **Continued and Integrated Care Network**, the National Health Service provides a diverse set of frameworks that have an very relevant impact on the quality of life of patients and their families.

I'm focusing the transition of patients to hospitals, when absolutely needed, to socio – occupational unities and to domiciliary support provided by national health services, private institutions or social services, with whom the Health Ministry establishes partnerships.

With this type actuation the national health services reinforce the quality of mental health care provision, e. g. to groups with specific necessities, as children and adolescents with psychopathology.

The **Continued and Integrated Care Network on mental health** provides the adequate conditions to develop individual programs of psychosocial rehabilitation to those who need.



MINISTÉRIO DA SAÚDE

GABINETE DA MINISTRA

It's allows, as well, that citizens diagnosed with severe mental disease that don't have psychological or family conditions to stay in their own homes can afford of humanized and professionally supported residential structures that promotes socio-professional reintegration.

Recently, on World Mental Health Day, I had the pleasure of announcing that we have the conditions to move to the implementation of pilot experiences on continued care.

Models of cooperation with patients' associations, as **ADEB-Associação de Apoio aos Doentes Depressivos e Bipolares**, with institutions of the private and social sector will allow that the **Continued and Integrated Care Network on mental health** will become a reality in Portugal.

This is a fundamental move, between others, to answer to the anxiety of many families that, naturally, ask themselves about the future of their relatives with relevant severe mental diseases.

Thus, I'm secure in the work of many institutions, as **ADEB-Associação de Apoio aos Doentes Depressivos e Bipolares**, will develop.

Before finishing, I would like to share with you a concern of Health Ministry about several international studies on **psychotropics prescription in Portugal**. The data reveal an irrational prescription which can translate real risks for the citizens' health.

Naturally, I'm not referring to the absolutely necessary psychotropics that are prescribed to other patients' groups. And to those, I ask them to clarify who doesn't need of permanent medication, to not abuse of the created benefits for those who really need of support to have access to medication.

The Health Ministry, trough National Mental Health Coordination, is preparing strategies to promote a better prescription of psychotropics.

These strategies aim to answer to the challenge of a better usage of available resources and of dissemination, between psychiatrists and general practitioners, of good practices guides concerning mental health management.

We're, then, in a sensitive moment in which National Health Service is creating the conditions to provide better expectations to children and adults with severe mental health.

But, for this, it's needed to define regulatory mechanisms that allow that only those who do really have justified motives to have benefits of special support, e.g. free access to medication, have it, avoiding abuse situations and even fraud.

The present and future of National Health Services depend of the capacity of all of us, patients, as well, collaborate to a more rational use of the resources.

This concerning has to be, necessarily, on the agenda.

For the sake of the healthcare in Portugal.

Thank you.