

M5X02249: Legal, Ethical and Professional Issues in Mental Health

Week 1: Afternoon lecture

- The Psychiatrist and the Clinical Psychologist
- The Mental Health Nurse and the Occupational Therapist
- The Social Worker and the Counsellor



The Psychiatrist

- Sally Coombs was a young art student who was brought to the Acute Care Ward of her local psychiatric hospital on a `Section 136` by two police men. They had been called by staff at a local Mental Health Day Centre that Sally had been attending. Sally has `gone berserk` in the OT room during an art session.
- She had not hurt anyone, but slashed canvases and damaged easels and other equipment before storming out. Both staff and Sally`s parents were most concerned about her, but she had calmed down by the time the police had found her wandering the streets. She appeared withdrawn and did not know where she was. She refused to talk, but made it clear that she would not go back to the day center. Following discussion with the day center staff, it was decided to take her to the acute ward under a section 136 for assessment.

The Clinical Psychologist

- Ellen is a 32 year old nursing assistant divorced and living at home with her parents. She has been seeing you for anxiety issues which led to the loss of a job and further anxiety issues.
- She had recently accepted a new post working night shifts at a hospital.
- Through your work with her you see evidence of depression, trauma and BPD. She has a long history of interpersonal conflicts and resented being taken advantage of at home and in work.
- Her main goals were to work, save money and secure her own home. She wanted to be self-sufficient and manage her emotions more effectively.
- On a subsequent visit she brings a letter addressed to human resources of the nursing facility. She believes that she has a right to work the day shift given the effect the night shift is having on her mental well-being. At the bottom of the letter is a second space for your signature to indicate your endorsement of her request.

The Mental Health Nurse

- Susannah the Mental Health Nurse
- As a mental health practitioner you begin your career believing that the service user is the `expert` on their experiences.
- You are working on an in-patient unit and help someone to construct their own care plan, but the response to your work is that you are `too involved` and you need to maintain your professional distance.
- How would you respond?
- How easy do you think that it would be to maintain your beliefs in practice?

The Occupational Therapist

- Billy has been seen for 5 years at an OT clinic. He has not really made any progress for the last 3.
- At what point do you call it a day?
- The decision will eventually have to be made, however his OT has documented such small goals for improvement that the child manages to meet a miniscule goal every 6 months.
- Billy has not however, really made any progress and you have a waiting list of many other children who are desperate for referral and treatment.
- To make things even more difficult, you have known Billy`s mother since your school days and you feel a personal duty to them both.

The Social Worker

- You are a professional working closely with a service user sectioned under section 3 of the Mental Health Act. Your relationship with and knowledge of the service user has enabled you to develop an outline for arguing that her medication can be reduced as she feels it is too high.
- She wants to present her plan at a forthcoming meeting but is scared to do so because she is intimidated and knows that the rest of the team do not want this to occur. She asks you to do it.
- What would you do?

The Counsellor

- You are working as a counsellor for a new organisation which use the therapeutic approaches of CBT and mindfulness. You are well practiced in both techniques.
- On your second day you are presented with a 32yr old client accompanied by his father. The concerns are socially related.
- He explains that he has no friends and finds it difficult to relate to people of his own age. He shares that he is confused by people in general.
- Following discussion of his experiences he identifies creating a circle of friends as his main goal, with a secondary goal of finding a romantic partner. He also shares that he is more suited romantically to someone around 16-17 years of age.
- He finishes by stating that this age group is more attractive and would have more in common with him.