

# MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE USERS, EMPOWERMENT THROUGH TRAINING, THE EMILIA PROJECT

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## INTRODUCTION

The mentally ill constitute a group in great need of help [1] as they present very complex problems which are not limited only to their symptoms. These problems affect their basic psychosocial function and integration into the community [1]. The EMILIA project (Empowerment of Mental Illness Service Users: Lifelong Learning, Integration and Action) aims to train and empower users, families and professionals of mental health to achieve better social integration and integration into the work place.

The training consists of various modules based on the methodology of Lifelong learning (LLL). By being more empowered users can learn more about mental illness and hence have a better control over their own lives and as a consequence achieve higher levels of satisfaction. The training does not only focus on the negative aspects of the illness but exams the wide range of skills and resources that users have [3].

## AIMS

Training programs based on Lifelong learning (LLL) to empower users, facilitate social inclusion and promote access to normalized jobs.

## METHOD

The training programs focus on users personal strengths and experience in the mental health services using the LLL method. Innovative pedagogical techniques such as proactive and collaborative training with users are used to help the integration of the patient in his/her surrounding and allow for insertion into the workplace.

Sessions: Training duration: July 2007- February 2008. Each module consisted of 6 sessions with a length of 1h 45 min. Size of group variable.

### Criteria for selecting study group

- Be unemployed.
- 18 years or over.
- Diagnosis of squizofrenia (ICE10, F20) or bipolar disorder (ICE 10, F31).
- Have at least 3 years contact with mental health services.
- Accept voluntarily to participate in the study, sign a consent form.

### Criteria for exclusion

- Dementia.
- Learning difficulties.

## RESULTS

Six training modules have being carried out during six months:

Modules	Participants	Hours of Training	Trainers
PDP (Personal Development Profile)	30	8	Psychiatrist Psychologist Psychiatric Nurse
Red Social	16	20	Psychiatric Nurse User
Recovery	27	36	Psychologist User
Strengths	20	12	Psychologist User
Families	35	42	Psychiatrist Psychologist Psychiatric Nurse
Training of Health Professionals	18	14	Psychiatrist (1) Psychologist (2) Psychiatric Nurse (2) Users (4)

## CONCLUSIONS

- Through LLL training program users are more empowered and are more active in the treatment process of their illness.
- All training groups were highly motivated and participative.
- Feedback from the groups showed the training to be useful not only for users but also for family members.

- The participants (users, families and professionals) commented on the need to increase the length of training.
- Users have conquered their initial fears of talking and presenting in front of professionals during the "Training of Health Professionals."
- The training has allowed for users and professionals to find a common way of communicating and learning.

## BACKGROUND AND GOAL OF STUDY

[1] C Gisbert, P Arias, C Camps, A Cifre, F Chicharro, J Fernández, J González, F Mayoral, J Moro, F Pérez, A Rodríguez, JJ Uriarte (2002) Rehabilitación psicosocial del trastorno mental severo. Situación actual y recomendaciones. Cuadernos Técnicos 6, Madrid: AEN.

[2] Chamberlin, J. A working definition of empowerment. Psychiatr Rehabil J. 1997; 20: (4) 43-46.

[3] Canadian Mental Health Association. Back to basics: Enhancing our capacity to promote consumer participation and inclusion discussion guide on recovery.

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