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The dual commitment of a naval outpatient clinic specialized in chemical dependency of the Brazilian Navy: The patients and the institution

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An inaugural study conducted at the Center for Chemical Dependency (CEDEQ) of the Brazilian Navy through an ethnographic study, with participant observation, from 2005 to 2009, investigated the influence of the naval organization in the construction of these patients' alcoholism. One of the main results of the major study revealed the existence of a double commitment of this Outpatient Clinic, both with the patients and the institution. The results encompassed topics such as the functioning of this Center, the therapeutic contract, anonymity, confidentiality, discharge, relapses, readmission, withdrawal, secondary gains, "scams", sanctions, and ambiguous perceptions about the role of the CEDEQ. In addition, the research demonstrated that the CEDEQ seems to be divided into two orders, therapeutic and military ones. In practice, the staff and patients are committed to the naval system, since the CEDEQ is part of the military structure. The patients feel that it is an extension of their working space, a place where they can share the same codes, rules, and language, mainly because they are connected by common experiences. Immersed in the naval culture, the CEDEQ somehow incorporates the values and codes of the Brazilian Navy, reproducing the institutional view that blames individuals for their deviant acts linked to alcohol addiction. Although the therapeutic approach focuses on the rehabilitation of the patients based on the principles of the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and behavioral techniques, this clinic must keep the administration informed about their diagnosis, prognosis, and status regarding their recovery. To summarize, the conclusions related to the dual commitment of the CEDEQ with the Brazilian Navy and the patient's treatment help to understand the peculiarities of the organization that contribute to the emergence of these patients' alcoholism.

Biography

Elizabeth Halpern is a Psychologist and a Frigate-Commander of the Brazilian Navy, a specialist in Medical Psychology, a Master in Collective Health, and a PhD in Mental Health. She dedicated 28 years in the Brazilian Navy hospitals and outpatient clinics, working as a chief and therapist, from prevention to rehabilitation, giving lectures and courses to military personnel, assisting families, couples, adolescents, and children, in groups and individually. As the Chief of the Center for Chemical Dependency during the last decade, she dedicated her practice towards addiction, and published 14 articles related to drinking practices in the workplace. Presently, she is the Chief of the Health Department of the Central Navy Hospital in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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