

5th International Conference and Exhibition on

Addiction Research & Therapy

October 03-05, 2016 Atlanta, USA

Perspectives from the inside: Black feminist perspective of treatment for women with co-occurring disorders in the psychiatric hospital

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Saint Elizabeths Hospital is the District of Columbia's psychiatric facility for individuals with serious and persistent mental illness in need of intensive inpatient care and assistance in their recovery process. Mental health evaluations and care are also provided to individuals committed by the court system. Personalized treatment plans are developed to help each individual in care achieve the highest quality mental health outcomes. In 2010, the hospital made the transition into its new 450,000 square foot, state-of-the-art facility. The new building's therapeutic design includes bright and airy living and treatment spaces, while incorporating best practices in modern, in patient mental health care with an environmentally sensitive design and sustainable strategies. It has green spaces off each patient unit, enclosed courtyards and a 28,000 square-foot green roof that is likely the largest on any psychiatric facility in the country.

The purpose of this presentation is to explore the perspectives of women diagnosed with co-occurring disorders on the treatments provided by a state psychiatric hospital so that appropriate recommendations for changes in treatment may be made. In the study Critical ethnography was used and the data was viewed through the lens of intersectionality from the black feminist perspective. Seven women hospitalized in one psychiatric hospital in the Mid-Atlantic region participated in the study. Data was collected via semi structured interviews, Consumer Perceptions of Care survey, researcher's observations, and archival data. Three major findings emerged: (1) Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) was identified as a beneficial treatment, (2) a lack of trust in the system and people in the system, and (3) housing or homelessness was perceived as a barrier. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended clinicians, administrators, and policy makers listen closely to individuals receiving treatment to make decisions regarding treatment accordingly.

Biography

Creswell earned her Doctor of Education in Counseling Psychology from Argosy University/Washington DC. She is a board certified music therapist and a licensed clinical professional counselor who has worked in the field of mental health in various settings for the past 15 years. Prior to moving into an administrative role, she spent 11 years as a music therapist working with children, adolescent, adult and geriatric populations. She has a wealth of knowledge in program development and has a long standing interest in developing and modifying treatment provisions for women with severe and persistent mental illness, trauma, and substance use disorders. She has conducted research on women's perspectives of treatment in the psychiatric institution with plans to conduct further research. She is invested in creating a robust gender-responsive program for women with co-occurring disorders receiving treatment in psychiatric institutions and to enhance their therapeutic treatment experience.

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