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Exploring experiences and practices of self-care, coproduction and coherence in care in the everyday life of people with severe mental and physical illnesses

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Statement of the problem: Patients with severe mental illness (SMI) and physical comorbidity have approx. 10-20 years shorter lifespan than the background population with chronic disease. This excess mortality stems from physical diseases (60%), which are underdiagnosed and undertreated. Patients with SMI and physical illness are treated across sector borders and different initiatives has showed disappointing results and with difficulties in engaging both patients and general practice (GP). Background: This PhD is part of The Phy-Psy Trial, which is a large research project with the primary aim of reducing the all-cause mortality of patients with SMI and comorbidity in Denmark. The Phy-Psy aim is to design an individualized, complex intervention. My Ph.D.-project contributes to this intervention by focusing on the patients.

Methodology and Theoretical orientation: The purpose of my Ph.D.-project is to answer the following empirical questions through a patient perspective: 1) how does patients with SMI experience and deal with physical illness in their everyday life? 2) What role do family have in supporting their relatives with SMI and physical illness? 3) How do people with SMI and physical illness navigate in the organizational landscape and how do they create coherence across sectors? The Ph.D. is based theoretically on an everyday life perspective and on theoretical terms: embodiment, practices of self-care, coproduction and coherence in care in the everyday life of patients with mental and physical illness. The Ph.D. is based on an ethnographic fieldwork involving patients with mental and physical illness, their relatives and the professionals who support them in their daily lives, using participatory observation, go-alongs and interviews with patients, their relatives and the professionals.

Contribution: The results from the Ph.D.-study will contribute to developing the Phy-Psy intervention. The contribution to the World Congress on Medical Sociology & Public Health is to discuss the research design.

Biography

Iben Emilie Christensen has expertise in evaluation and qualitative methods like interviews, focus groups and observation. Iben has extensive experience in designing and conducting qualitative surveys and evaluations conducted by and across the hospital, general practice and municipalities. Here, she incorporates and combines the experiences of patients and professionals with, for example, prevention, treatment, diseases, change and public health. Her overall passion is to improve the conditions for patients in the health care system.

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