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Abstract Submission Form – Papers

Please contact John Tuohey at ethics@providence.org with any questions.

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Proposed title of paper: How to manage the gap between what homeless people expect from hospitals and their real medical as well as social needs? An empirical ethics study

Abstract with 3 clearly stated objectives in 250 words:

As a clinical ethics centre, we were wondering how to give its whole place to the principle of respect for autonomy, in taking care of homeless people. Should we respect what they are asking for when coming to hospitals or should we try to give them more according to their special vulnerable status? We decided to implement an empirical clinical ethics study to rethink this difficult ethical issue.

Methods: 3 different public hospital settings in Paris participated in the study: a traditional general hospital emergency room [Setting 1], an out-patient setting for underprivileged people [Setting 2], a “mental health and social exclusion departement” located in a psychiatric hospital [Setting 3]. The study was conducted by means of in depth qualitative interviews with every homeless patient arriving in one of these three settings and one or the other health care member that received them. Interviewers were members of the clinical ethics team.

Results and discussion: 54 patients were included. Populations appeared quite different concerning their social and medical conditions. The response of the institutions were also quite different. It seems that there was a sort of coherent match between patients’ demands and the institution’s answers and that the existing system proposes a sort of optimal balance between quantity of caring and respect for autonomy. But is it enough to conclude that we can be ethically satisfied? We will discuss if we should not do more with very marginalized people, trying to install a solid relationship as a first step towards autonomy enhancement.

If you have or will publish on this topic, please cite reference:

Beetlestone E, Serres P, D'Haussy J, De Champs Léger H, Mercuel A and Fournier V. What homeless people expect from hospitals: results of an ethics study about patients' autonomy. European Networks of Homeless Health Workers (ENHW), Issue N°9 - spring 2009.

Are you planning to or will you be willing to submit a poster along with your paper?

Yes No