
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Actua, tots per tots (act, all for all)

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This abstract describes a self-advocacy program for people with mental health conditions. The programme called "ACTUA, TOTS PER TOTS" (ACT, ALL FOR ALL) has been designed and implemented by ATRA, an association with 30 years of experience in the treatment and care of people with mental disorders, addictive behavior and at risk of social exclusion. Key characteristics of the programme are the participation of volunteers with and without mental disorder.

After 15 months of implementation, 30 persons have been attended with positive results and 23 volunteers have been involved.

This INNOVATIVE program supports independent living for people with mental illness by incorporating the participation of volunteers with and without mental disorder. Participation of volunteers with mental illness positively enriches the program because it encourages cooperation and mutual support among people with the same challenges and experiences. Empowering these participants also helps to break down the stigmas associated with mental illnesses. It helps them build their confidence and self-esteem. All the volunteers, those with or without disease, share tasks and responsibilities to support people with mental disorders, who live alone or with their family and need supervision to maintain stability his/her disease and to live a normal life.

The program was initiated based on two key data points. First, there was a need detected by professionals. Secondly, it considered a study by the local mental health service (CSMA) that identified an additional 103 possible beneficiaries of this program.

The program aims to promote independence, improve quality of life, empower people with disabilities arising from mental illness, enhance the process of rehabilitation and facilitate patient's integration to the community. Specifically, it is an answer to the unmet need for guidance and support in performing activities for daily life with the objective being that the patients themselves are beneficiaries, as well as participants in their rehabilitation to a normal life.

The ACTUA, TOTS PER TOTS program develops innovative and social transformative practices which are easily reproducible, making them available and transferable to other municipalities, countries and regions. It leverages an integrated approach to the individual and his/her needs with all actions aimed at his/her empowerment and full social inclusion. The beneficiaries have

an active indispensable participation in the process from the very design of their PAP (personal attention program), which targets working within different areas of daily life: self-care, community skills, occupational and social Relations and domestic skills.

Key elements of the Program:

1. The team of "ACTUA, TOTS PER TOTS" is composed of two professionals with extensive experience within the field of Mental Health.
2. Volunteers play a key role in the development of this program and training is a crucial aspect. All volunteers receive training prior to any involvement in the program, as well as continuous training throughout their involvement in the program. Each volunteer is assigned a number of beneficiaries, debriefed on the beneficiaries' PAP objectives and responsible for making home visits, with a frequency dependent on the needs of the person assigned.
3. The networking. Fluid and open-communication between the different professionals treating the person is indispensable.

The program began in July 2014 thanks to the support received from the Obra Social La Caixa and Diputació de Barcelona. In 2015, ATRA also received a grant from the Generalitat de Catalunya.

Results of the first 15 months of implementation: Today, we attended to 30 people with mental disease from Garraf County. They receive support through individualized, custom-attention (tutoring with volunteers and professionals) and group care (professionals). ATRA also works with families at both the individual and group level. To date, we have successfully detected eight cases where individuals were not following the prescribed pharmacologic treatment properly, two cases of Diogenes syndrome, two psychiatric admissions were avoided, 17 people have started leisure activities, three people were suspected and confirmed to have addiction problem, and three people went back to study. Finally, we have supported four people mourning the death of a family member. Each month the list increases, highlighting the effectiveness of the program.

Currently, ATRA has 23 volunteers participating in the program, eleven of them with mental illness. The message the volunteers gives is "If I can do it, you can do it also".

Conclusions: People who participate in the program improve in the different areas of their PAP.

Volunteers, help and support others, empower participants, fight the stigma of mental illness and increase social awareness. Sharing their experiences gives them the opportunity to show themselves as people and show everything they can do without constraints they often feel when diagnosed with a mental health problem.

Keywords: actua tots per tots; volunteers with mental disorder; independent living; empower people with mental illness; stigma of mental illness
