

EPA GAINING EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME REPORT

On the observership visit at the Eating Disorders Unit, La Clinique des Maladies Mentales et de l'encephale, Hopital de Sainte-Anne, Paris, France

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From the 12th to the 23rd of February, 2018, I have been in the Eating disorders unit at the Center for Diseases of the Brain, at the Sainte-Anne Hospital in Paris, under the supervision of prof. Gorwood.

The reason why I wanted to visit this department was to learn more about how eating disorders are dealt with, seeing that in Romania we do not have an organized integrated system to manage these pathologies, so it is often extremely hard to manage the patients efficiently from both a psychiatric as well as a somatic point of view.

The first thing to say about my observership in the department is that it was truly a life-changing experience. It did not only meet my expectations regarding learning more about how to deal with eating disorders from an integrative, team-based approach, but it also helped me define my expectations for my professional path.

I felt very welcome at the housing institution, being very well integrated by the department staff and the residents that were at the moment in rotations on the department. I had the opportunity to observe the weekly reevaluations of the patients by the whole team, their daily meetings with different members of the team, as well as the case-related meetings that the members of the team organized several times a week, in order to discuss the plan and progress of each patient. I have also attended the weekly journal club and lectures for doctors and medical professionals that were organized in the department.

I have also had the opportunity to interact with the patients, while they were being controlled by the interns. It was striking to observe how well-acquainted with their disorder these patients were.

The visit was very fruitful, in the sense that I got to observe the complete case management, from admission, to the planning of the therapy course, including the psychotherapy sessions, medication prescription and surveillance, up to the discharge of the patient from the department, and their consecutive follow-up in the ambulatory care. I was particularly impressed by the organization of the French mental health-care system and of the huge team work involved in the case-management. Moreover, I was surprised by the level of training of all the personnel around the doctors. The true feeling was that, even if the pure medical approach does not differ too much from the one back-home, the whole complementary system that comes along with it, including the social organization of the medical system, is decades more advanced. Another very useful interaction that I had was with the dietician of the team, who was very kind and held me a crash-course in how to adjust eating ratios according to the planned weight goals for the patient.

One of the most applicable things that I took home from the internship, was the idea of designing a weight-management contract. During my return back in Bucharest after the internship, I have had the opportunity to apply both the knowledge that I got from the discussion with the dietician (to several of the cases that I had managed), as well as the weight management plan contract (to one case, with good results). Another very interesting thing that I observed during my stay on the department was the therapeutic relationship that developed between the patients and the members of the staff, be they doctors or not. This institutional psychotherapy approach seemed to be efficacious and it impressed me in terms of how well-prepared all the members of the staff were, as I have mentioned before.

Another very interesting thing for me was to observe the organization of the departments in terms of daily living rules for the patients. The fact that every aspect of their life was being taken into consideration (starting from teaching them how to eat and going through teaching them how to accept their body and how to dress) was surprising for me.

If I were to draw just one conclusion from this observership, it would be that, even if all the things that have baffled me are, when regarded from a logical, utilitarian point of view, completely expectable, they aren't, unfortunately, the norm in all the countries. They are not, however, impossible to implement, but the task of making sure that these recommendations are being carried-on would have to fall firstly upon the

shoulders of the family, as we do not yet have such performant care-teams. Their implementation, though, is crucial for the long-term out-come of the case.

All in all, my visit passed without any difficulties, and I have also had the opportunity to discuss the things that I have observed, as well as the take-home points with my colleagues back in Bucharest.

Overall, this experience was truly remarkable for me and I would like to thank EPA on this occasion for this fantastic opportunity.