

A Psychiatric Hospital Explores The Effects Of Publicity On Forensic Psychiatry Patients

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Scott Reichlin MD, a forensic psychiatry specialist based in Salem, Oregon, shared a new article on the effects that negative publicity has had on forensic psychiatry patients. In his articles, he discusses the stigma that these patients have to live under since public perception universally identifies them, incorrectly, as criminals.

The article, titled "Effects of Publicity on a Forensic Hospital," explores how these facilities have changed for the worse over the past few years, especially in Oregon. Forensic psychiatry hospitals in the state have undergone many changes and major reformatations following an incident where a patient escaped. Even though the patient was re-arrested shortly after their escape without further issue, this event caused an uproar that was escalated by the press, generating general discomfort among Oregon residents regarding the administration of public mental health systems, especially when they deal with forensic psychiatry.

The negative press coverage that took place on a daily basis on the months following the event led to major reforms in the forensic psychiatry system, affecting many more aspects of the facility in addition to their security. Today, years after these reforms, Dr. Reichlin states that forensic psychiatry hospitals have more in common with a prison than a care facility, and the view that society has of their patients is that of individuals who are embarrassing, offensive and even a danger to themselves and other people?despite the fact that forensic psychiatry hospitals have proven to be extremely beneficial for both patients and their loved ones.

Dr. Reichlin states, "Most people describe forensic psychiatry patients as being ?criminally insane,? illustrating the stigma this group of patients faces in society. The negative impact that this has on the way mental conditions are treated is immeasurable, and it also affects the patient's ability to reintegrate into society after their treatment is completed. Furthermore, this negative view affects the state of security in forensic psychiatry institutions, as it is usually treated with paramount importance. These institutions have complex procedures and policies that are designed to ensure those who reside and work in these places remain safe, and that there is little chance of patients escaping."

The restraints and prohibitions that are put into place to prevent patients from escaping consequently have a widely negative impact on the efficiency of any treatments they undergo. Dr. Reichlin states that finding a balance between security and the treatments that each patient requires is difficult, and this issue is not given as much consideration as it is due in Oregon forensic psychiatry institutions.

The article continues, "In a hospital, there is a tight level of security measures to prevent an escape, and they usually come at a great personal cost to patients. This cost usually arises in the limitations on how they can smoothly integrate back to society once their treatment finishes. Most forensic patients lack the basic skills needed for proper and harmonious living in a community, such as choosing friends as well as budgeting and planning their time and cash. To learn these skills, patients usually need guidance as well as some exposure to real-life community experiences."

Dr. Reichlin states that it is this community-like experience that the forensic psychiatry hospitals in Oregon lack, as it is nearly impossible to create a balance between the security measures required and the therapy needed. Over the course of the coming years, the decay in the quality of the treatment offered will become much more evident as patients who complete their programs will struggle to reintegrate themselves into society and live a normal life.

A more thorough study of the effects that the decay of the forensic psychiatry health care system has on patients is available on Dr. Reichlin's website. He has published a nine-page paper thoroughly discussing the effects of publicity on a forensic hospital. He states that he seeks to raise awareness about this issue that is currently affecting thousands of mentally-ill patients in Oregon. Interested parties are therefore welcome to contact Dr. Scott Reichlin to follow up on any inquiries they may have on the subject.

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For more information about Scott Reichlin MD, contact the company here: Scott Reichlin MD
Scott Reichlin (503) 945-9958
LisaSanchez5969@gmail.com
2600 Center St NE Salem, OR 97301

Scott Reichlin MD

Dr. Scott Reichlin, MD is a forensic psychiatry specialist in Salem, OR and has been practicing for 36 years. He graduated from Univ Of Co Sch Of Med in 1978 and specializes in forensic psychiatry.

Website: <http://scottreichlinmd.com/>

Email: LisaSanchez5969@gmail.com

Phone: (503) 945-9958

