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THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN CARING FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN A HIGHLY COMPLEX HOSPITAL IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL

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Abstract: The social worker is a professional who seeks to guarantee social rights for users. The LGBTQIA+ population has historically fought for basic rights and the “T” population of this acronym is fighting for the right to undergo procedures and treatments to adapt their bodies to what they identify with. Through the Transdisciplinary Gender Identity Program (PROTIG), the Hospital de Clínicas de Porto Alegre (HCPA) offers multidisciplinary care to transsexuals who wish to undergo sex reassignment surgery. The Social Worker’s consultation takes place between one of the first PROTIG appointments and aims to understand each person’s context and life story, as well as identifying a support network.

Keywords: Social work, transsexual, rights

INTRODUCTION

PROTIG began in 1998, after the Federal Council of Medicine defined the initial guidelines for assisting people with Gender Dysphoria (LOBATO et al., 2001). In Brazil, people who identify as the opposite gender to their birth gender (ICD-10-WHO) have access to public health services for gender transition treatment. According to the resolution of the Federal Council of Medicine, CFM Resolution 2265/2019 - a document that regulates care for gender affirmation in the Unified Health System (SUS) - people who define themselves as transgender must be cared for by a specialized multi-professional team and can have access to individual and group care with professionals in psychiatry, endocrinology, social work, psychology, nursing, speech therapy, gynecology, urology and mastology (Ordinance No. 2,803/2013). PROTIG’s care activities take place through educational interventions in individual and group sessions.

As for family support, we know that many transsexual people are thrown out of their homes because of prejudice related to their gender identity, so it is necessary to identify a support network, because transition is also a collective/social thing. When possible, it is important to talk to the family, but the fact that the person has no contact with blood relatives cannot become a criterion for follow-up.

Working professionally with the transsexual population means a constant struggle to make the transsexualizing process viable, as well as social rights.

PROTIG/HCPA is one of the only places that performs sexual reassignment surgeries, so it serves the whole country, which makes it necessary to coordinate with public resources such as the Out-of-Home Treatment Program (TFD), developed by SUS, which should ensure that no person is left unattended because they live in a region that doesn’t have a specific service.

During the social assessment, it is important to learn about the patient’s developmental history and how their gender identity was constructed; to understand the story of how the family came to identify their gender construction as inconsistent with their biological sex; to explain how PROTIG works, where the patient will be followed up individually and in groups, with a multidisciplinary team, for at least two years.

It is inevitable to address situations of prejudice and manifestations of violence and the implications of these situations; Clarify the patient and his/her family’s access to rights (health, social assistance, social security). Provide guidance on the patient’s right to be called by his/her social name.

Inform the patient of the procedures required to rectify their name and gender.

Articulate with the internal and external service network, according to the demands and needs of each patient.

In professional practice, engagement, sensitivity and, above all, respect are important. There are constant and impactful

ways of learning how to fight and resist situations of extreme vulnerability, prejudice and violence, often simply by (re)existing.

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