



I15 Identification of Risk and Protective Factors for Violent Behavior in a Population of Forensic Psychiatric Patient Offenders in the Apulian and Lucan Areas of Italy

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand risk and protective factors of violent behavior inside the forensic psychiatric facilities in Puglia and Basilicata, Italy.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating, once identified, the risk and protective factors of violent behavior in socially dangerous subjects with specific treatment proposed.

Introduction: Over the past few years in Italy, the treatment of psychiatric offenders has undergone profound changes, following a series of court and legislative interventions that have radically changed the forensic psychiatric treatment panorama. The process of overcoming and closing judicial psychiatric hospitals (Ospedali Psichiatrici Giudiziari [OPGJ]), presented to the Decree of the President of the Council (D.P.C.M.) on April 1, 2008, with the transfer of health competencies related to detainees to the Ministry of Health over a period of less than ten years, led to an approach strongly based on the regionalization of the treatment of forensic psychiatric patients. This change involved, among other things, the establishment of the Residences for Execution of Security Measure (REMS) and the transfer to regional psychiatric facilities all patients with a profile of being socially dangerous in a psychiatric sense so as not to require a correctional-type security measure.

Law 81 of May 30, 2014, sanctioned the final transition to different treatment models for the socially dangerous offender. All Italian regions have therefore involved themselves in identifying and creating structures to welcome people deemed socially dangerous from the psychiatric point of view. At the same time, it has become a regional task to plan the social reintegration of acquittees with infirm minds coming from OPGs that are closing, whose social and health assistance have been entrusted to mental health departments.

This was also the case for the Puglia Region, where a special commission planned the discharge of the internees in the OPGs originating in the region, providing, in addition to the REMS already activated, ten dedicated communities (communities for patients with safety measures) for offenders with mitigated socially dangerous profiles.

In this regard, the welfare reorganization of the mentally ill offender presents a series of critical issues related to the estimation of the levels of social danger and the adequacy of the different structures for the treatment and rehabilitation of patients with specific profiles, as well as to the safety and protective needs of the community.

Considering the lack of empirical data in this regard, the acquisition of greater knowledge on risk and protective factors within the specific and particular Italian psychiatric-forensic treatment reality is essential.¹⁻⁵

This study aims to evaluate the recurrence rate of new violent behaviors and/or crimes in forensic psychiatric patients subjected to a security measure and entrusted for treatment to mental health departments (DSMs) in any form of treatment (REMS, dedicated community, therapeutic-rehabilitative community, outpatient treatment, etc.) and to evaluate the effectiveness of treatments and the relative differences in reducing violent behavior.

Conclusions: The main expected result is the identification of risk and protective factors for aggressive and/or violent behavior within the specific forensic psychiatric population under study after the closure of high-security Italian hospitals. The second expected result is the estimation of criminal recidivism rates, as well as aggressive and violent behavior in the study population and the relative differences in comparison with the control group. The initial data obtained one and one-half year after the beginning of the present research show how aggressive and/or violent behaviors are present in the experimental group in only a negligible percentage. The rehabilitative approach with these types of patients seems to be effective.

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Risk Factors, Protective Factors, Violent Behavior

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