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Patients' attitudes towards and acceptance of coercion in psychiatry

Eva Krieger^{a*}, Steffen Moritz^b, Ricarda Weil^b, Matthias Nagel^a

^aDepartment of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Asklepios Clinic Nord – Wandsbek, Jüthornstraße 71, 22043 Hamburg, Germany

^bUniversity Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Martinistr. 52, 20246 Hamburg, Germany
ev.krieger@asklepios.com

moritz@uke.de

ma.nagel@asklepios.com

ricarda.weil@gmx.de

***Corresponding author: Eva Krieger** Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Asklepios Clinic Nord – Wandsbek, Jüthornstraße 71, 22043 Hamburg, Germany

Abstract

Coercive interventions for psychiatric patients are controversial. Research on different preventive measures has increased over the last years. The present study examined patients' attitudes towards and understanding of previously experienced coercive measures as well as their preferences related to coercive measures and possible alternatives. In total, 213 patients who had experienced coercion and 51 patient controls (patients staying voluntarily on a closed ward with no coercive treatment) from three acute wards were examined via expert interviews and questionnaires in the framework of a naturalistic trial. Assessments included a new self-developed questionnaire as well as instruments measuring psychopathology. Patients who had experienced coercion differed from controls in both symptoms and insight into their illness. As expected, “noninvasive measures” (e.g., the use of a “soft room,” observation in seclusion) were better accepted by patients than “invasive measures” (e.g., mechanical restraint, forced medication). Forced medication and mechanical restraint were less well accepted than involuntary hospitalization, seclusion, or video surveillance. The retrospective understanding

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