

# Peer support, associations and community

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# Targets

- The interest of studying community health from the perspective of patient organizations
- Associations and self-help practices play an essential role in terms of information, support and prevention.
- Community health philosophy

# French history

- In France, it took a long time for patients to organize themselves in associations/non-governmental organization.
- Philanthropic leagues, family associations and health professionals : aid and services for...
  - Medical goals
- Delegation model

## 3 periods of development of users' associations

- 1970'

Critics of psychiatric power

Groupe Information Asile (GIA)

- 1980'-1990'

Influenced by the associative movements against AIDS

Mutual aid between patients + political activities focused on partnership

To be actors in political and medical decision-making

- 2000'

Law 11 février 2005, creation of the *Mutual Aid Groups* (in French "GEM")

Self-help groups financed by the state

- ✓ Help people with mental disorders to break away from loneliness and participate in society.
- ✓ Develop places that promote social participation for all and support the mental health of participants.

In 2019, 456 GEM have been created

- ✓ « Access to the ordinary life », through mutual aid and socio-cultural activities
- ✓ Include the GEM activity in the life of society
  - Not necessary to be recognized as disabled or ill to participate

# GEM

- The intersection of care objectives and the consolidation of social links
- Link between health and social services
- Not dependent on either the medical or social services
- no health professional could exercise their profession within such an association

# The setting

- Be included in everyday life
- Break away from the image of illness or the medical world
- Performative dimension: the location has an effect on the way participants define themselves and get involved in society.



# The identity

- Nobody talks about "sick" or "disabled".

The participants introduce themselves as "people"

Self-help is part of a health approach but is not determined by a diagnosis.

self-determination has a performative effect.



# The time and the place

- to be flexible enough to adapt over time to the needs of people with mental disabilities
- the moments of solitude identified by the group
- The GEM is above all a place of passage among others
- A meeting place and a place of daily resources, helping to take care of their mental health

# Other places

- The Clubhouse

A springboard to an active social and professional life for people living with a mental disorder

- The place of respite

A place of welcome for homeless people living a psychological crisis

- The recovery college

A learning center within the community where any person with or without mental illness

# Perspectives

- Participation of the community in improving its health
- Patient organizations (GEM) : promoting good mental health for people who are ill or not

BUT

Not enough attention for vulnerable populations

No enough attention for population in difficulty with the French language or culture

Not enough attention to the general population

paying attention to social inequalities in health, in patient organizations

*patient organizations are central to a community approach to mental health*