2015

Using recreation to create a therapeutic milieu that works for mental health consumers

Shane Pegg
University of Queensland

Lorna Moxham
University of Wollongong, lmoxham@uow.edu.au

Dana J. Perlman
University of Wollongong, dperlman@uow.edu.au

Susan Liersch
University of Wollongong, sliersch@uow.edu.au

Christopher F. Patterson
University of Wollongong, cpatters@uow.edu.au

See next page for additional authors

Publication Details
Using recreation to create a therapeutic milieu that works for mental health consumers

Abstract
Abstract of a presentation

Disciplines
Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

Authors
Shane Pegg, Lorna Moxham, Dana J. Perlman, Susan Liersch, Christopher F. Patterson, Renee M. Brighton, and Ellie K. Taylor

This conference paper is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/smhpapers/3345
Mental health consumers are often socially isolated and may lack the basic leisure competencies which serve as a critical building block for community (re)integration. Therapeutic recreation (TR), as a treatment modality for people with mental illness, is yet to be fully embraced in the Australian health-care setting, despite having a strong historical foundation in North America. Academics from the University of Wollongong and University of Queensland teamed up to create a TR experience, termed the Recovery Camp, which was designed to collectively engage consumers and future health professionals drawn from a range of discipline areas.

The 2014 Recovery Camp was staged over a five day period and involved 28 mental health consumers aged from 26 to 63 years of age who undertook a diverse range of experiential recreation activities engineered to facilitate individual engagement and to encourage the development of positive therapeutic relationships and teamwork. The camp atmosphere was deliberately community-based and recovery-oriented, valuing the lived experience of mental illness. Over the course of the intervention, the consumers were encouraged to extend their limits, to appreciate the importance of self-evaluation, as well as to practice a desired level of autonomy. Those consumers who attended the 2014 camp reported a number of mental health conditions, ranging from Depression and Bipolar disorder to Schizophrenia and Schizo-affective disorder.

Using a 2 x 3 design involving an intervention and comparison group, the study sought to examine the influence of a TR program on the self-determination of individuals with a mental illness. Study results revealed a statistically significant difference in mean scores for perceived choice and awareness of self for the intervention group as compared to the comparison group. Study findings serve to support the role of recreation within a recovery framework to positively change the health-related behaviour of mental health consumers.