

Interdisciplinary evaluation: interface between psychiatry and forensic psychology

Avaliação interdisciplinar: interface entre psiquiatria e psicologia forense

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DEAR EDITOR

The study of the causes and consequences of the growing urban violence, the enhancing rates of work disability and labor accidents regarding mental illness, just to mention few examples, increasingly requires the engagement of psychiatrists and psychologists to help enlightening the facts, as answering the questions concerning mental health and justice altogether demands a multilayer comprehension¹.

The advances in psychiatry, psychology and more recently in neuropsychology, contributed a great deal for the justice system to interact with these fields of knowledge when dealing in causes regarding the human being, thus richly valuing the role of forensic sciences². Although psychiatry and psychology are different in many ways, in the forensic context it is central that they can work together, as the collaboration among the many mental health professionals enhances the reliability of the documents, lending credibility to the justice decisions³.

It is usual that the requiring authority asks for a “psychological and psychiatric evaluation”, as if they were a synonymous. As this is frequent, we started the interdisciplinary evaluation in the Forensic Unit of the Instituto de Psiquiatria do Hospital das Clínicas da USP, including, beyond psychiatric and psychological assessment, the neuropsychological and personality evaluation, when applicable. From February/2012 until August/2013 we received 352 justice requirements, 62% from criminal justice and 38% from labor or civil prosecutions. The interdisciplinary evaluation was required in 22% in the first and 43% of the former.

These data show that the justice system is frequently dealing with questions that cannot be answered without the assistance of a multidisciplinary staff, which we see as an opportunity to expand the boundaries of the mere description of signs and symptoms and help the justice with a comprehensive assessment of the mental state of the individual in legal cases⁴.

Thus the collaboration between these two professions has the potential to increase both the credibility and utility of forensic services to the courts⁵.

DISCLOSURE

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