

Oral presentation

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Co-operation and understanding versus custodialism and violence: user and survivor involvement in services, education, administration and political decision making

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from WPA Thematic Conference. Coercive Treatment in Psychiatry: A Comprehensive Review
Dresden, Germany. 6–8 June 2007

Published: 19 December 2007

BMC Psychiatry 2007, **7**(Suppl 1):S92 doi:10.1186/1471-244X-7-S1-S92

This abstract is available from: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-244X/7/S1/S92>

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This is a vast topic and with only 15 minutes to discuss the issues involved I am going to concentrate most on what I know which is the situation in the UK or even more so now England where I live and work as a mental health user consultant. I will explain my journey from being a passive recipient of violence and custody for my own good to being enabled to speak at this event on co-operation and understanding in the areas described above. Patient and Public Involvement has been the mantra of successive governments in the UK of both left and right persuasion, I will explore what this has meant to user/survivors survivors such as myself. I will explain how I have adopted a pragmatic approach by working with the mental health system to try and make the system accept the need for change by taking on board our views and concerns. However I will acknowledge that this pragmatic approach could be seen to have failed as new coercive elements are currently being debated and are likely to become law. I will try and analyze why mental health users and survivors are listened to but not heard and the frustrations this engenders in not only users and survivors but our allies in the system who also want radical change from coercion to co-operation which would be better for everyone's mental health.