

The Right of Taiwanese Individuals with Mental Illnesses to Participate in Medical Decision-Making

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Abstract : Taiwan's Mental Health Act was amended at the end of 2022; they added regulations regarding refusing compulsory treatment by patients with mental illnesses. In addition, not only by an examination committee, the judge must also assess the patient's need for compulsory treatment. Additionally, the maximum of compulsory hospitalization has been reduced from an unlimited period to a maximum of 60 days. They aim to promote the healthcare autonomy of individuals with mental illnesses in Taiwan and prevent their silenced voice in medical decision-making while they still possess rationality. Furthermore, they plan to use community support and social care networks to replace the current practice of compulsory treatment in Taiwan. This study uses qualitative research methodology, utilizing interview guidelines to inquire about the experiences of Taiwanese who have undergone compulsory hospitalization, compulsory community treatment, and compulsory medical care. The interviews aimed to explore their feelings when they were subjected to compulsory medical intervention, the inside of their illness, their opinions after treatments, and whether alternative medical interventions proposed by them were considered. Additionally, participants also asked about their personal life history and their support networks in their lives. We collected 12 Taiwanese who had experienced compulsory medical interventions and were interviewed 14 times. The findings indicated that participants still possessed rationality during the onset of their illness. However, when they have other treatments to replace compulsory medical, they sometimes diverge from those of the doctors and their families. Finally, doctors prefer their professional judgment and patients' families' option. Therefore, Taiwanese mental health patients' power of decision-making still needs to improve. Because this research uses qualitative research, so difficult to find participants, and the sample size rate was smaller than Taiwan's population, it may have biases in the analysis. So, Taiwan still has significant progress in enhancing the decision-making rights of participants in the study.

Keywords : medical decision making, compulsory treatment, medical ethics, mental health act

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