

Emancipatory perspectives on health and well-being

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The law and literature on children's consent greatly differ from observed practices in two London hospitals. The law and literature generally assume that legal minors cannot consent until their mid-teens, they cannot refuse recommended surgery, and children deemed pre-competent have no rights to information. However, our research found that with non-urgent heart surgery including heart transplants, practitioners inform young children and respect their consent or refusal. How can these wide differences be explained?

Our qualitative study included: literature reviews; observations in wards and clinics, audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 45 healthcare professionals and related experts; interviews and a survey with parents and children aged 6- to 15-years having elective surgery; meetings with an interdisciplinary advisory group; thematic analysis of qualitative data and co-authorship of papers with participants. Approval was granted by four research ethics committees/authorities. All interviewees gave their informed written consent.

Critical realist data analysis helped to show that views about children's ages of competence to be informed, and to consent to non-urgent heart surgery or refuse it, are associated with differing emphases on informed, or signified, or voluntary consent. These relate to the three critical realist levels of reality: empirical, actual and real.

The law and literature stress empirical informed consent, and test for children's intellectual understanding of the nature and purpose of surgery, the risks, hoped-for benefits and any alternatives.

In contrast, practitioners are very concerned with children's actual signified consent, responding to their active cooperation or resistance or refusal.

Whereas theorists respect reasoned 'dispassionate' consent, practitioners value real unseen emotional voluntary consent. They help children to journey from fear and doubt towards trust, confidence and courage, to become willing when wanting the hoped-for benefits.

Greater respect for all three elements of consent encourages respectful emancipatory understanding of children's consent.

Structure, agency and situational logics in the mental health system in England:
Theorising perspectives on mental distress in socio-historical context

Presenter: Rich Moth

Organisation: Liverpool Hope University, UK

Abstract:

This paper presents a domain-specific theory developed from the findings of an empirical study examining neoliberal policy reform within community mental health services in England and its implications for professional practice and conceptualisations of mental distress. The paper begins by outlining the study's application of 'emergentist Marxism'(EM), a form of morphogenetic approach, which is adapted by integrating emerging Marxist scholarship on temporalities. This integrative approach underpinned theorisation of the study's findings to develop a domain-specific theory: the 'pentimento'. This framework offers a dynamic account of how practitioner and service-user activities are shaped by situational logics within stratified, laminated and sedimented organisational environments to explain the context-sensitive shifts between perspectives for understanding and responding to mental distress by practitioners and service-users observed within this setting. The framework's explanatory utility is further demonstrated through its capacity to illuminate the enduring prominence of biomedical perspectives and practices in the mental health system despite recent service reorientations towards social inclusion and recovery approaches.

Migrant workers: who cares for their health and well-being?

Presenter/s: Birendra Singh
Organisation: University College London

ABSTRACT

As I write this the Euro 2020 competition is in full swing and the FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football) World Cup will take place in Qatar in 2022.

A video: <https://youtu.be/MP3ZkHyPFx8> - only two or three minutes of it.

The video shows a group of singers and musicians singing a sad song about a young woman's lament and heart-rending plea to her husband to come home for Holi, a festival of colour, celebrated in Northern India. She is missing him but does not know that he is not free to come home. Her husband is a migrant labourer working abroad.

"Dear husband I miss you so much, my heart aches and my eyes cry, please come home even for a day during this festival of colour and romance".

The stadium and facilities for hosting the World Cup will be ready on time thanks to the blood, sweat and tears of the migrant workers. A chance meeting with one of these workers at a covid vaccination centre reveals the wretchedness of their existence while they are working on the World Cup project. The vaccination centre provides a rare opportunity for migrant workers to experience a glimpse of freedom and have a chance to talk to someone other than their fellow labourers in the camp.

One worker said that they are always escorted by the contractor's men, everywhere they go. Conditions at work are dire. Living conditions are wretched too, with up to ten men living in a room.

The world cup will be enjoyed and celebrated with drama, excitement and passion. The media will promote the 'beautiful game', masking the 'absence' (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 38) which is being experienced by this young woman and thousands of others like her.