

**Mental health budget as a tool to contrast disease chronicity:
Preliminary findings of a longitudinal study on autonomy development**

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People with mental disorders often suffer from physical and social disabilities and need help in their daily life activities [1]. Development of their autonomy in these activities (e.g., personal and home cleanliness, meal preparation) is positively associated with their rehabilitation process. Research has shown that community-based rehabilitation is effective in supporting the development of different forms of autonomy and improving life quality for this kind of patients [2].

The present study was aimed at inspecting how autonomy in everyday activities develops across 12 months, and how different activities covariate across time, in a sample of people with mental disorders. The patients followed a rehabilitation program including a Mental Health Budget (MHB), under the supervision of Cooperativa Franco Basaglia (CLU). The present study examined data stored in Televita database, between 2013-2016. CLU staff rated 76 patients monthly along different forms of autonomy in everyday activities (hygiene, clean clothes, personal environment cleanness, home cleanness, meal preparation, taking a walk autonomously) by using a 0-100 scale. For the present study, participants were selected when repeated data were available across 12 months and when variability across time was reported. The majority of patients were fully autonomous or, on the contrary, fully dependent. Only eight patients (4 males) met the criteria; they were aged between 32 and 64 years. Within-person covariations between variables were analyzed.

Results from multi-level modeling analyses showed that patients did not show any significant increase in their capability to take care of themselves or of their environment, across 12 months. Results, however, also revealed that the inspected variables were significantly associated across time ($p \leq 0.05$). Indeed, within-person increases in personal hygiene were positively associated with increases in taking care of clothes (Fixed effect: $b = 0.27$), and taking a walk ($b = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$). In addition, increases in home cleanness favored increases in personal environment cleanness ($b = 0.52$), taking a walk ($b = 0.39$), and using clean clothes ($b = 0.26$).

These preliminary findings are encouraging: They show that the development of different forms of autonomy are interrelated. Rehabilitation programs should thus invest on such everyday activities in order to promote higher level autonomy. Further data are needed to corroborate the present findings and to explore how the development of patients' autonomy might help patients to increase their psychological well-being.

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