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Summaries of the main articles

Family visits to geriatric centers during Covid-19 pandemic – the unheard voice of staff members

Doron Merims¹, Rinat Cohen¹, Tammy Porat-Packer¹ and Tania Boguslavsky¹

The Covid-19 pandemic continues, and its negative effects are manifested in damage to health, economy and social resilience. The way to deal with the complex challenges and conflicts that this crisis presents is to find solutions of balance and compromise. Maintaining the right balance may save lives, reduce burn-out and help to cope with the crisis over time. In this context, one of the sensitive issues that needs to be addressed is finding the right balance between enabling family members to visit their loved ones in geriatric centers and nursing homes while minimizing the risk that visitors will infect hospitalized patients or staff.

The theme of family visits of patients hospitalized in geriatric centers and nursing homes during the Covid-19 pandemic occupies a central place in the public agenda. The families' struggle for this humane and justified purpose, supported by organizations for the rights of the elderly and the media, creates a pseudo-conflict with the treating staff members, whose voices, in this highly important matter, are not heard. During this period, geriatric centers face complex challenges. The already understaffed hospital team, deals with the addition of new wards to treat patients with Covid-19, while preserving the function of the geriatric center as a hospital that provides unique services to patients who are negative for SARS-CoV-2, among them, end-of-life patients in need of supportive care, patients with advanced dementia and behavioral disorders and patients in need for rehabilitation. Exposure to a visitor that carries the virus not only puts all patients and staff at risk of infection but may force staff members to a period of confinement and, as a consequence, reduce even more the number of available nurses, physicians and other health care providers. This article presents the staff difficulties, risks, concerns and challenges with a specific reference to the issue of family visits, during the era of Covid-19 pandemic.

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It also emphasizes the lack of awareness, understanding, empathy and support to the staffs' daily struggle to keep the delicate balance between enabling family visits and keeping the patients and staff safe during a life threatening long-lasting pandemic.

Poverty-aware critical community practice: a conceptual framework

Roni Strier¹

From its early beginnings as a profession and as a scientific field, social work has seen communities living in poverty as one of its main target populations, both in practice and in research. However, the profession is moving worldwide away from significant community engagement in these communities. This transformation is part of a widespread erosion process of the professional status of community practice in social work. In Israel, this process is reflected on several levels such as the decay of community work in public social work, a decrease in number of students interested in specializing in this field, a lower amount of academic community work tracks in higher education institutions, and little social work research papers and articles.

The ever-expanding dimension of inequality and poverty in both Israel and the world requires the profession to return to its origins and to offer community solutions that can help these communities deal with the roots and impacts of poverty. This article offers a unique conceptual framework for poverty-aware community practice. This framework addresses five major characteristics of poverty-stricken communities: progressive marginalization, dependency, multidimensional deprivation, internalized oppression, and lack of participation. The article presents basic principles for poverty-aware community practice: deep engagement in community life, encouraging egalitarian partnerships, constant learning from

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community knowledge, adherence to participatory approach, developing social rights discourse, striving for change in power relations, dealing with intersectionality, and advancing critical methodologies that incorporate micro and macro practices at the community level.

Between "something a bit made-up" and "a fully developed position": occupational social work as a changing profession

Dr. Limor Gadot¹ and Noga Pitowsky-Nave²

Historically, occupational social work had focused on two main fields: welfare services in the workplace context, and rehabilitation of people with disabilities. In the past few years there has been a transformation in the focus of occupational social work, which moved on to assisting people dealing with poverty and unemployment, helping them integrate into the world of work.

This research aims to examine the new version of occupational social work, from the perspective of occupational social work practitioners. The research addresses several main topics regarding occupational social work: the meaning of this professional role for occupational social workers; their areas of interventions; and their main professional practices. This research offers initial and pioneering insights regarding the renewed profession of occupational social workers.

Data was collected in 2017 using in depth semi-structured interviews, conducted with social workers employed in occupational programs in Israel, in government agencies and in the voluntary sector (n=16). The data collected were analyzed qualitatively, in a thematic content analysis.

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Findings show that there are common interventions, procedures and professional tools used by occupational social workers, that could be identified in spite of the variety in their employing agencies. Nevertheless, this field of social work practice is still in the process of formalization and lacks a distinct theoretical framework. The field includes individual casework, group practices and community outreach programs, while neglecting policy practices.

The findings highlight the need for academic and practical training in the field of occupational social work that serves populations dealing with poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, there is a need to expand this field of occupation to include policy practices, designed to address barriers that negatively affect work integration.

The National Insurance Institute's worsened financial situation and its implication for the legislation of social rights: unemployment insurance as a test case

Michal Koreh¹, Rotem Wolf¹ and Omer Cohen¹

At the heart of this article is the question of whether the deterioration in the financial situation of social insurance programs and the change in their funding sources has been affecting the legislation of entitlements of the insured public. We examined this question through a case study of the Israeli unemployment insurance program, whose independent sources were eroded and which has to rely now on external budgetary sources to pay unemployment benefits.

Our findings show that the deterioration in the program's financial situation is correlated with a series of cuts whose frequency and severity increased as the financial situation worsened. We also find that this correlation is not accidental, as the financial deterioration served as a major reason for

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passing legislative amendments that tightened eligibility criteria, reduced the level of benefits and shortened the period of eligibility for receipt.

In addition to the decline in economic value of the benefits, we observe a change in the nature of the rights granted under the unemployment insurance plan, mainly the weakening of the correlation between the insured's salary before the unemployment event and the amount of benefit to which he is entitled. This change undermines the nature of the benefit as a wage replacement benefit capable of protecting the standard of living of the insured during his period of unemployment. While a financial deterioration of the unemployment insurance program already occurred in the early 1990s, a similar development is currently unfolding in other insurance programs.

According to actuarial forecasts, unless addressed, this matter is expected to develop into a structural deficit ending up in liquidation of the Institute's entire reserve fund. The summary of the article discusses the lessons that can be learned from the case of unemployment insurance to other social insurance programs implemented by the Institute, if and when the Institute goes into a continuous financial deficit.

Between two homes: marital and family relationships among Israelis in commuter families

Sheffer Liat¹ and Sarai B. Aharoni¹

Commuter families, where one spouse lives in a different country due to work obligations and the other spouse is the main caretaker, form a small but growing family pattern in Israel. It is difficult to estimate the number of households with such arrangements since they are not recognized by the Israeli authorities as an occupational or bureaucratic category. Consequently, this study offers one of the first attempts to examine how commuter families narrate their private experiences and navigate the

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tension between traditional family values and neoliberal identities in a globalized world. The study was carried out during 2018. It is based on 17 in-depth interviews with heterosexual married couples with joint children, who maintain two homes as part of commuter partnerships and on a group interview with seven women in commuter marriages. The interviews examined the perception of family; the impact of the commute on spouses' levels of satisfaction with their relationship, including intimacy and gender roles; and the strategies used as a means of coping with the challenges of commuter marriages.

We found that in the vast majority of families, the traveling spouse was the husband and the caring spouse the wife. The findings indicate that commuting is an occupational strategy that enables middle class Israelis to maintain or improve their socioeconomic status, and is also seen as a way to fulfill professional and personal aspirations. However, the study also found a difference between the interviewees explicit and implicit voice. The explicit narrative of commuter couples frames this arrangement as a positive process in which the man fulfills himself by establishing his identity as a global citizen and a male breadwinner, whereas the woman is a supporting wife that adopts traditional feminine ideals of domesticity. The wives, regardless of their education or occupation, tend to delay or relinquish their personal aspirations to support the familial economic cause. The implicit narrative of commuter couples, reveals the various problems and hardships in managing marital relationship and maintain a sense of family while living apart. Emotional stress, anger, guilt, loneliness, conflicts of identity and coping with social criticism, were reported. The study concludes by explaining the various managerial strategies adopted by these families in order to cope with such tensions.

Gut feeling: a cultural perspective of eating disorders among young Ethiopian females in Israel

Rinat Grundman Shem-Tov¹, Eynat Zubery¹, Noa Loevy Hecht¹ and Yael Latzer²

In recent decades there has been a significant increase in the prevalence of eating disorders among non-Western populations. However, there is evidence in the scientific literature which indicates various forms of ED expression among different cultural groups. In this article, we will focus on eating disorders as a possible manifestation of mental distress among Ethiopian women in Israel. We will address the unique socio-cultural circumstances and aspects, such as the immigration process, the integration into Israeli society, identity issues and traumatic situations, that may be helpful with the assessment process and treatment. Challenges related to cultural perceptions of health and mental and physical conditions, and especially eating disorders, will also be discussed. For illustration, two case studies will be presented. In the discussion, a culturally-sensitive diagnostic model is proposed that may help to understand eating disorder symptoms among these applicants, including reference to aspects related to the culture of origin, the process of migration, and the encounter between cultures. This model assumes that the observation of clinical cases from different cultural backgrounds cannot be achieved solely through a Western diagnostic prism. In addition, an integrated diagnosis that includes Western orientation diagnostics, a Cultural Formulation Interview and a complex post-traumatic image will be presented extensively.

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