The impact of legislation on coercion in psychiatric services in Finland

Anu Putkonen, MD, PhD
Forensic psychiatrist,
Niuvanniemi Hospital,
(University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio)
Anu Putkonen
affiliations, conflicts of interest

* Psychiatrist/ forensic psychiatrist. Specialist doctor and researcher in Niuvanniemi Hospital ("Niuva"), Department of forensic psychiatry, University of Eastern Finland (UEF), NI Kuopio
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1. Legislation of containment in Finland

**Mental Health Act** (1992) revision 1997: "involuntary care".

* "Significant decrease of involuntary care was associated with the improved access to outpatient care and huge decrease of hospital beds since the end of the 1980’ies.” *


* European Human rights Council: "MHA does not assure the human rights of a person in involuntary treatment." (438/2014)

* CPT: several recommendations of involuntary psychiatric care

* A new law of restrictions for all health care sectors is delayed by ongoing huge reformation of social and health
What changed with Mental Health Act revisions?

- The intention of the law: "Restriction of the fundamental rights must always be based on law."
- 10 legal restrictions (+ staying in the hospital by night)
- The restrictions, not the decrease of them, must be ordered and postulated!
- In traditional prison & psych. hospital culture fundamental rights (free movement out, communication, own money, etc.) were routinely lost when admitted, and had to be "earned"
- The intention was to limit the indications of S/R. However, the final law was often misunderstood to legitimize the old practices.
- Reporting of long S/R to AVI
10 restrictions allowed during involuntary psychiatric hospital care
MHA 11/2001; details in supplementary slides

* Seclusion
* Mechanical restraint (binding)
* Physical restraint
* Restriction of freedom to move (in the hospital area)
* Involuntary care of psychiatric illness
* Restriction of communication
* Confiscation of person
* Inspection of a person (blood- and urine tests)
* Confiscation of property and post (not reading)
* Involuntary treatment of a physical disease (includes medicines)
Municipalities organize mental health work, i.e. social and health care services & prevention, for their inhabitants

Social 6 Health Ministry (STM): general planning, guidance and supervision

Local administrative offices (AVI): local planning, guidance & supervision, particularly of restriction of the basic rights in 4§ (containment measures)

S/R use is allowed only in public psychiatric hospitals.

Containment and care of forensic psychiatric patients is also defined in MHA
* **Inspections**: The National Supervisory Authority (VALVIRA) and the Regional Supervisory office (AVI) may inspect the psychiatric hospitals if there is reason, without informing the unit before it. (33a§).

* **Correction**: Eventual inadequacies in mental health services must be corrected. The institute or function may be closed if patient safety necessitates it. (33b§).

* **Remarks**: A municipality, association of municipalities, state hospitals or state officers may be remarked for future, or required improvement. (33c§)
1. Mental illness / adolescent’s severe mental disorder
2. Such a need of psychiatric care that without involuntary admission the mental illness would get considerably worse, or the person’s or other persons’ health or safety would be seriously threatened, and
3. Alternative mental health services are unsuitable or insufficient

- Under-aged (<18y) may not be treated with adult patients
Seclusion: A person may be ”involuntarily secluded from other patients” in three conditions:

1. He/she is likely* to **injure him/herself or others** (behaviour or a threat)
2. His/her behavior severely **complicates the treatment of others**, severely risks her safety, or he/she is likely* to remarkably destroy **property**
3. It is nesessary for **other very weighty reasons**
Mechanical restraint (22e)

* ”If a patient is likely to injure her/himself or others, he/she can be tied with a belt or other comparable way, if other acts are insufficient”
* "In these situations staff may use necessary containment measures (SIC!) for holding the patient to seclude her/him. The doctor must be immediately informed."

* "A patient may be physically restrained even in other situations if it is necessary for care." (SIC!)
2. The impact of the law after revisions: fewer S/R episodes, same practices

* ”A 15-year national follow-up: Legislation was not enough to reduce the use of seclusion and restraint” 1990 vs. 2004
* Results: Number of individuals exposed to S/R decreased. Same risk of being secluded or restrained, same duration of R, longer duration of S. Huge local differences.
* Conclusion: ”Legislative changes solely cannot reduce S/R or change the prevailing treatment cultures. S/R should be vigilantly monitored and ethical questions should be under continuous scrutiny.”
Interventions to prevent S/R in Finland 2011-2016

2008-2009 first controlled study of the efficacy and safety of a coercion prevention methodology in Niuvanniemi Hospital:

”It is possible to significantly decrease the use of S/R without increase of violence, with the 6 Core Strategies (6CS).

2011-2013 the psychiatric hospitals’ representatives met regularly in NIHW task force for S/R reduction in Finland.

Discussions, sharing of ideas, local interventions. Editorial group: ”Coercion reduction and increase of safety in care

2011 and 2016 Niuva organized a national training by KA Huckshorn and J. Lebell, the authors of the Six Core strategies.”

Active hospitals and e.g. Helsinki district, decreased S/R. Some hospitals did not participate and/or increased S/R.

- Total exposure of the Finnish population to involuntary care and restrictions has decreased after the new legislation, peak rate was 2006-2007.
- Some districts have decreased, some have increased S/R.
- The association between S/R decrease and the legislation is unclear as the law did not ban any previous practices or limit the indications.
- Many efforts to reduce S/R in Finland have unintentionally used the Core Strategies for reduction of S/R.
Out of 5.5 million inhabitants, 23,665 individuals experienced psychiatric hospital care, (503 / 100,000)

- 32% (7,534 persons) involuntarily; (27% reduction to 2006),
- 31% (2,329) of them experienced restrictions
- 46% (1,520) were secluded (7% reduction to 2006)
- 21% in mechanical restraint
- 24% (787) experienced involuntary injection
- 10% (326) were physically restrained
Inhabitants (N) exposed to containment measures in psychiatric hospitals in Finland 2003-2013
Seclusion, mechanical restraint, forced injections, and physical restraint
Number of individual patients exposed to coercive interventions in psychiatric hospitals Finland **2005 -2014.** (National task force to reduce S/R 2011-2013) seclusion (blue line), mechanical restraint, involuntary injection, physical restraint.

![Graph showing trends in coercive interventions from 2005 to 2014]
Psychiatric hospital care in Finland 2006-2014 (number per 1000 inhabitants). Length of a hospital stay in days (red line), Users of open services (blue), outpatient visits /user, Users of hospital care, Number of hospital stays.
Did the practices change?

* Huge local differences: some decreased S/R, some increased
* S/R may have been replaced by physical restraint on the ground – (no data of the proportion of prone restraint, the most dangerous restriction)
* Awareness increased. S/R reduction with single interventions in local projects. One 6CS study among adolescents (effective, PhD Anja Hottinen)
* Effective prevention of S/R depends on professionals, patients, and devoted hospital leaders.
* Used restrictions are chosen on the basis of traditions, rather than service user’s preferences (Traumas, sexual abuse, triggers)
* ”What is good for one person may be bad for another”: 
Problems of current legislation

- Encouraged old practices (67% not associated with violence), does not ban S/R used for punishment or staff convenience of, or call S/R ”last choise”
- Constitution and human rights
- No proper definitions for S and R – impossible to compare
- Does not limit or even record physical restraining of a person on on other surfaces, or pushing him on the ground by several persons (restraint deaths, triggering of patient-to-staff violence) e.g.
What is SECLUSION in the literature? (APNA definition 2007)

Involuntary confinement of a person alone in a locked room or an area where the person is physically prevented from leaving”
A definition of RESTRAINT in the literature (APNA 2007)

“Any manual method, or physical or mechanical device, material or equipment that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a person to move his or her arms, legs, body or head freely”

• Physical, mechanical, chemical, electronic etc...
**Needed**

- Expressed aim to reduce coercion in psychiatric care
- Service users’ full inclusion
- Non-discriminating attitude and language
- Recommendations of systematic prevention of S/R & violence by improving the culture of care with 6CS
- Detailed definitions of S/R and variables
- On-line monitoring and supervision system of all restrictions
- Incidence and duration of S/R (per patient days), to enable benchmarking and positive competition
What France could do to reduce S/R?

* 1. Provide the mission of psychiatric care

* 2. Define all legal restrictions and when, where and how they can be used. State that “Restriction of fundamental rights should always be based on law”

* 3. Organize on-line monitoring, reporting and feedback system for each hospital.*

* --Include number and total duration of all restrictions, particularly of prone restraint (and total number of patient days). Consider bonus salary limits.