

Lecture

## **Comprehensive Psychosocial Evaluation in the Mentally Ill: The Role of Social Work in the Interdisciplinary Approach and in the Psychosocial Rehabilitation of the Mentally Ill**

Verikaki, Olga

Social Worker, MSc, General Hospital Evangelismos, Athens, 2nd Vice President,  
Hellenic Association of Social Workers.

### **Abstract**

The main feature that differentiates clinical social work from psychiatry or psychology, as an approach to the mentally ill, is the emphasis placed on the social context of behavior and its deviation from the normal. Although severe mental disorders are characterized as having a neurobiological origin, the distinct mission of social work is to address the potential negative social effects of mental illness (Moxley, 1997). In essence, her practice is about exploring and correlating social-external factors with emotions related to the treatment of the disease. The skills of the clinical social workers to listen, understand, relate, explain and support is vital in helping individuals achieve a unification of physical, emotional, and social well-being and this requires their own ongoing training and clinical supervision (Moxley, 1997). Social Work focuses on the dynamic interactions of individuals and the relationship between formal and informal support systems. Therefore, the social worker brings to the interdisciplinary team the social dimension of each case, the social factors that influenced the onset of the disease and those that will enhance the most effective treatment and rehabilitation, considering the level of functionality and factors that can positively affect this. That means that the choice of the therapeutic approach must be closely linked to the objective conditions and the real needs of the patient. The “person-in-environment” theoretical framework requires the professional social worker not to associate the mental disorder only with genetic, metabolic, or biological factors, but to be able through specific tools to strengthen the individual, in what the Towle (1965) said, the fulfillment of common human needs (Gray, 2005). One of the key tools is the development of a close therapeutic alliance, with the aim of activating the “ego” and the possible environmental elements, as well as the adoption of skills that will enhance the feeling of personal self-sufficiency and self-worth in the mentally ill.

