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HIV/AIDS AND MENTAL ILLNESS DUAL DIAGNOSIS: EXPLORING HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS' PERSPECTIVE

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Aims: A growing body of scientific literature emphasizes a strong linkage between HIV/Aids and serious mental illness. In the Italian context, specialized services for combined management of dual diagnosis are increasingly requested, and healthcare professionals (HPWs) have to face up the difficulty emerging by this new situation. To bridge these gaps, the present study aimed at studying the representations of dual diagnosis, analyzing HPWs' experiences from their own perspectives, in order to understand their difficulty and create future good practices in healthcare services.

Method: A quali-quantitative study was conducted with a multidisciplinary sample of professionals (N=91), drawn by HIV/Aids and Mental Health sites. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, data were collected from semi-structured interviews: HPWs were asked about their work experiences with HIV/Aids and Mental Illness. The interviews were fully audio-taped and verbatim transcribed. A computer-aided lexical correspondence analysis was conducted by a dedicated text-analysis software.

Results: Data analysis showed out two main factorial dimensions: the first regarding the representation of the "Management of dual diagnosis within Health Services", and the second one referring to the "categorization of HIV/Aids-Mental Illness co-morbidity". Furthermore, four different Representational Conceptions were highlighted, corresponding to as many different ways HPWs use to represent/depict the aims of Health Service in relation to HIV/Aids-Mental Illness co-morbidity.

Conclusion: This study reveals that socio-cultural meanings of dual diagnosis are not fixed; rather, they are ongoing co-constructed within the activities carried out by the HPWs involved in their specific health contexts in the exercise of their profession.