

EPATH Conference 2017

Transgender Health Care in Russia

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Saint Petersburg, Russia



- The ability to change registered sex on the basis of transsexualism appeared in Russia only with the adoption of a law in 1997
- There are no medical standards regulating the process leading up to the issuance of such a certificate

- There are no laws regulating the procedure for changing name and registered gender
- Different regions may require different documents, or refuse to reassign gender
- Officials dictate what to do with trans people
- The diagnosis “*Transsexualism*” and at least some *body modifications* are usually requirements

- The situation with the examination of trans people is based on the *essential concepts* that were common in understanding gender dysphoria in the **1980s**
- The first aim of psychiatric treatment is to cure the feelings of cross-gender identity and *to help the person accept his/her sex of birth*

- Diagnosis of “transsexualism” are often based on *nonobjective criteria* and
- *no appropriate psychometric instruments* are used to measure gender-dysphoric symptoms
- In most cases, *appearance* in accordance with gender stereotypes seems to play an important role in receiving the diagnosis of ‘Transsexualism’, although this depends on the psychiatrist

- In most commissions the greatest support is still provided to the clients adhering to a *rigid gender binary* and confirming the orthodox model of transsexuality
- Any problems with the *affective sphere*, *addictive behavior* and "*heterosexuality*" or *non-binary* automatically become a qualification condition requiring *psychiatric treatment* with the *simultaneous ban on gender transition*

“true transsexuals”

“true transsexuals” are asexual and

❑ have lifelong cross-gender wishes

❑ have made suicide attempts

❑ show no fetishistic arousal in adolescence related to their choice of clothing

• ***Services were often denied if someone was not considered a “true transsexual”***

• only extreme gender dysphoria is seen to be defined as ‘transsexualism’

- In many cases transgender people are required to stay in a psychiatric institution for around **30 days**
- Being **hospitalized** in a psychiatric facility is often a humiliating, uncomfortable, and traumatizing experience for transgender persons
- transgender individuals are placed in the facilities with other patients according to their legal gender
- Before hospitalization, transgender individuals are made to sign an agreement on use of drug treatment

- One gets the feeling that the understanding of independence of *gender* from the body is still something unknown to psychiatrists and clinical psychologists working with transgender people in Russia
- Most psychiatrists in Russia don't even know the term '*transgender*' and do not understand who trans women or trans men are

9:00 – 11:40
(доклады по 20 минут)

СИМПОЗИУМ
«Транссексуализм в XXI веке»

Президиум:
А.Я. Перехов (Ростов-на-Дону), А.Б. Окулов (Москва),
О.А. Бухановская (Ростов-на-Дону)

Депатологизация транссексуализма. Причины и перспективы
Кирилл Сабир (Москва)

Кто должен оказывать помощь при транссексуализме?
О.А. Бухановская (Ростов-на-Дону)

Бред полового метаморфоза
А.В. Дьяченко (Ростов-на-Дону)

Гипердиагностика транссексуализма и гиподиагностика сексуального
зависимого поведения с синдромом отвергания пола
А.Я. Перехов (Ростов-на-Дону)

Гендерные нарушения глазами детского хирурга
А.Б. Окулов (Москва)

Инверсия полоролевого поведения в детском
и подростковом возрасте при транссексуализме
А.И. Ковалев (Ростов-на-Дону)

Транссексуализм: роль эндокринолога
Н.И. Волкова (Ростов-на-Дону)

Simposium “Transsexualism in XXI century”

September 24, 2016, Rostov-on-Don

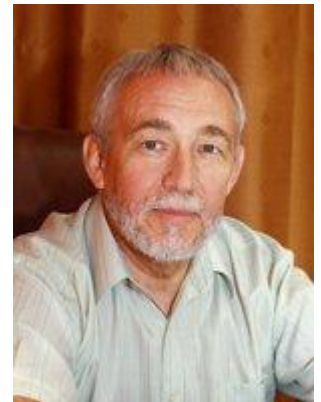
was held during the conference

“Psychiatry is my love”

All the prejudices and misconceptions that are characteristic of homo/transphobic society are fully reproduced by Russian psychiatrists and psychologists

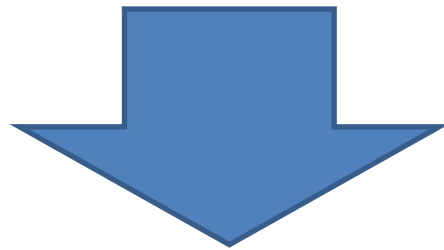
Russian Psychiatry: some Illustrations

- In December 2016, Professor Yuri Shevchenko, the Head of Department of Child Psychiatry and Psychotherapy (Russian Medical Academy of Continuing Professional Education, Moscow) has appeared in court as an expert and claimed that “*transsexuals are mentally ill* and communication with them is harmful for children and *can lead to shared psychotic disorder or schizophrenia*”
- As a result, the Moscow city court banned a trans woman from communicating with her child under 18 years



The ban on “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations” among minors (2013) makes it impossible to provide assistance to gender-nonconforming children and adolescents

- A significant problem is specialists' lack of awareness of trans issues
- The attitude is usually transphobic, which is the reason why many trans people are discouraged from visiting endocrinologists, psychologists and physicians especially where one has to expose his/her body



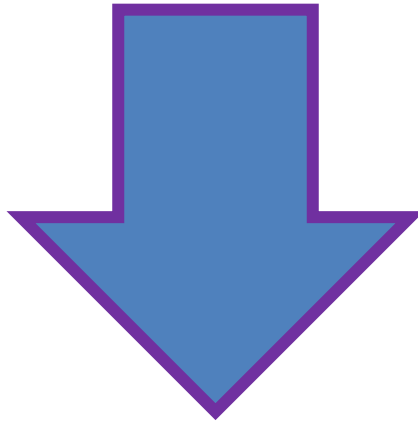
this leads to self-treatment

- *National insurance plans do not cover trans-related hormonal therapy and operations*, so the majority of trans people wishing to undergo these procedures do so at their own expense

Problem of depathologization

- WHO's proposal for “*Gender incongruence*” will not significantly alter existing practices in Russia (if they do not become even worse)
- It would be naive to believe that the state would do anything to the advantage of transgender people
- After depathologization, the person's wish to change sex in Russia will become virtually a whim

- There are concerns that with the adoption of **ICD-11** leading Russian psychiatrists will reject depathologization and develop alternative Federal diagnostic and treatment standards for transgender people



- There is complete unwillingness on the part of most psychiatrists in Russia to listen to arguments for *depathologization*
- There is very little knowledge of specialists with international experience, and an attempt to shake it off
- The problem is that by isolating themselves from the global professional community, Russian psychiatry adheres to views that are forty years old

Some more illustrations

- Vvedensky G.E., Matevosyan S.N. (2016) Methodological challenges for standards of care for persons with gender identification disorders *Social and Clinical Psychiatry*, 26 (3) 92-95
- According to the authors there are **32 %** persons with *schizophrenia* among transgender people
- The authors conclude that a strong tendency to *demedicalization* of gender dysphoria would result in deterioration of health care for these persons, including both *diagnosis* and *treatment*, and it should be taken into account in the course of **development of Federal guidelines on gender identification disorders**

But we still believe in the best

- Therefore, our commission for transgender people in Saint Petersburg continues to work, focusing on modern approaches in diagnostics and psychological assistance



«Human to Human»

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Thank you for your attention

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