

Abstract (englisch)

The psychiatric care system is currently undergoing major changes. This thesis on the topic of “Social Work’s Influence on the Prevention of Coercion in Psychiatric Treatment – the Professionals’ Views” was written in order to support the Ministry of Health’s project to prevent coercive treatments. Based on interviews with experts in the field, the following two main questions are discussed:

1. *What are the methods used by social work to prevent coercive treatments?*
2. *To what extent are coercive treatments employed in the psychiatric care system and accompanied by social workers?*

The theoretical framework includes insights into historical developments of psychiatric clinics, an overview of the current state of research, of ethical as well as judicial aspects and the roles and tasks of social work in this context. Another chapter of the theoretical framework refers to the existing alternative concepts aimed at reducing coercive treatments. Subsequent to the theory chapters, we provide a description of the method and of how we conducted the expert interviews. The collected data was interpreted by means of a content-based structured analysis which delivered essential results. Social work is deemed a major contributor to the process of reducing and preventing coercive treatments in psychiatric institutions. In order to achieve this, however, an increase in well-trained staff would be necessary, both in ambulant and stationary settings. The experts are mostly aware of existing alternatives to coercive treatments, but they are not able to implement these measures because of a lack of specialists, skilled personnel or funds. In addition to that, the reduction of coercive treatments can only be achieved if stationary and ambulant institutions cooperate and communicate more efficiently. Methods like psycho-education, crisis planning, or case management have to be further established and applied in practice.

This thesis addresses and reveals several research gaps and it constitutes a first step towards examining and dealing with them. The conclusion and discussion of prospects at the end of this thesis suggest further paths of research which should be conducted to approach a comprehensive abandonment of coercive treatments. To conclude, it can be stated that social work can play an important and considerably large part in reducing and preventing coercion; but it can only do so if it is generally more involved in psychiatric treatment.