

## Abstract.

### Working With a Patients' Self-help Organisation.

This paper aims to describe the origin, development and current activities of the Mental Patients Association (M.P.A.). It also describes the experience of a community psychiatrist who worked in cooperation with the organisation over a three year period.

The Mental Patients Association operates five residences for ex-mental patients, a drop-in centre and a newspaper. It is a vigorous crusader for mental patients civil rights and it does not hesitate to criticize the psychiatric profession.

Among issues confronted by the M.P.A. in the period under study were 1) the problem of violence; 2) pharmacotherapy versus the 'Laingian' approach in the treatment of psychosis; 3) community hostility, especially in response to the bizarre behaviour of a few members.

An attempt is made to describe the emergence of a fruitful working relationship between the M.P.A. and a community psychiatry team in the face of continuing anti-psychiatry rhetoric. It is suggested that psychiatry and self-help organisations such as the Mental Patients Association can find ample common ground since they share the same goals: the attainment of self-respect, independence and personal comfort by those people known as mental patients.

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