

MISSION

ARAP, an Association for the Reform Psychiatric Assistance, was established in 1981 **by the families and friends of people with a mental illness** for the purpose of advocating specific amendments to the Italian Mental Health Act number 180 that provide for **genuine psychiatric assistance** and, above all, **treatment for non-compliant patients**



Enacted in 1978 this Act which, most regrettably, had been rapidly drafted and approved, dismantled the psychiatric hospitals before replacing them with alternative mental health services. Consequently **patients were discharged and either left on the streets or sent home to their families** which the anti-psychiatry publications had systematically claimed to be authentic sources of folly!

It has now been scientifically demonstrated that mental illness is largely and organic disease. The brain is the most complex organ in the human body and, like other organs, is subject to disorders. Schizophrenia is one of the most serious disorders since patients, unaware of their condition, refuse treatment.

According to WHO, 20% of the worldwide population has some form of mental disorder and **1% of these patients is affected by schizophrenia**, regardless of their social status and the environment in which they live. Consequently, contrary to the opinion of the advocates of the Italian Mental Health Act, the main causes of schizophrenia are not of a sociocultural nature. Most patients with this condition are non-compliant, though **modern treatment** is more effective and the prospects more encouraging than in the past.

The belief that sectioning patients who are unable to recognise their disorder and need for medication is actually depriving them of their freedom is quite perplexing. The fact that millions of children are admitted to hospital and taken care of without their consent has never been challenged since this practice is regarded as being in their interest. Since cooperation between the Mental Health Services and families is lacking in Italy, the distress experienced by the latter is indescribable. Carers who are unable to rely on this service feel even more confused and desperate.

In addition, since families are not always capable of dispensing prescriptions and judging the reactions, **patients frequently receive inadequate treatment causing considerable harm to both their physical and mental health.**

Consequently many youths become chronically ill, whereas should they receive adequate treatment



the quality of their life could be acceptable. **Moreover, the enormous burden on public finance produce no real wellbeing for patients.**

No other illness involves families as much as a mental illness since, besides health, this condition also involves social and legal issues. When psychotic patients break the law they are taken before a judge and, though merely guilty of being ill, risk imprisonment in a normal or psychiatric jail.

ARAP advocates amendments to the Mental Health Act which protect

Patients' right to medication and care
Families' right for assistance and safety
Citizens' right for safety
and invites all citizens to join this battle.

ARAP also asks citizens to fight the medieval stigma associated with mental illness.

Established on the 7th April 1981, ARAP is a non-profit organization for community work, (ONLUS), which was registered in the list of the Regione Lazio's voluntary organizations on the 30th November 1995 and in the registry of legal entities on the 15th October 2001.

