

Poster presentation

Mental illness in Crete in the beginning of the 20th century: the Souda lunatic asylum

G Lentaris*^{1,2}, G Labiris¹ and G Theologos²

Address: ¹Intermedico Medical Network and ²General State Hospital of Pireus, Psychiatric Department

* Corresponding author

from International Society on Brain and Behaviour: 1st International Congress on Brain and Behaviour
Hyatt Regency Hotel, Thessaloniki, Greece, 20–23 November, 2003

Published: 23 December 2003

Received: 1 November 2003

Annals of General Hospital Psychiatry 2003, **2**(Suppl 1):S92

This article is available from: <http://www.general-hospital-psychiatry.com/content/2/S1/S92>

Background

To look for any data available, regarding the existence and function of state mental institutions in Crete during the past.

Material and Methods

Inquiries were made for relevant material in the Historical Cretan Archives building, as well as the Municipal Library of the City of Chania.

Results

The first official provision for the insane in Crete was held in 1910, 12 years after gaining its independence from the Turks and 3 years before the island's formal reunion with Greece, when the Parliament of the Independent Cretan State voted for the formation of a lunatic asylum near the port of Souda. Local police officers and Mayors were responsible for gathering the insane patients. The military doctor was then entrusted with pronouncing whether the patient was necessary to be confined or discharged. In his absence, the municipal doctor, or the "doctor for common women" had to carry out this task. Some 330 patients were admitted but later their number nearly doubled. The local prefect had the authority of inspecting the asylum without prior notice. It should be noted that the superintendent earned the same salary as the steward, which was double than that of the guardians. The families of the patients had the obligation to pay for their expenses while in the asylum. Pauper patients were admitted after a sworn deposition about their poverty by the local priest and the mayor in front of the magistrate. Even though there are records of fines imposed for every corporal or verbal assault, the conditions in the asylum were far from being ideal.

Discussion

The Souda lunatic asylum provided for the mentally ill, serving as the unique establishment of its kind in the island, from the institution's opening to its deinstitutionalization in recent decades.