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Recovery: a duty or a virtue?

Nowadays there is growing attention for the concept of recovery in psychiatric health care. Originally the concept was developed by service users. Psychiatry was more focused on symptom reduction and rehabilitation. Although it is clear the symptom reduction and personal recovery have a different meaning, there are still some theoretical and ethical questions concerning the meaning of recovery and the way it relates to symptom reduction in psychiatric health care. As the process of recovery is a personal journey, it is unclear which factors can promote this journey. The longer I work as a psychiatrist, the less I know. And also literature does not give clear answers to this question. For some patients a diagnosis or forced treatment might be helpful, for others these factors may undermine their process of recovery. And what does it mean for patients when the goal of thirty percent more recovery is set in governmental reports. Does this stimulate recovery processes, or are we taking as health care workers and policy makers the concept away from where it belongs, namely the patients?

In this lecture I will discuss some ethical dilemmas concerning the concept of recovery in psychiatric practice. Maybe it is a duty for health care workers to support recovery of patients. However, in order that recovery will not be a duty for patients, we'll have to reflect on the virtue of recovery as well.