
THE "ERLANGEN SYSTEM" OF OPEN CARE: A TRIBUTE TO GUSTAV KOLB (1870–1938). 80 YEARS AFTER FORCED WITHDRAWAL FROM HIS "LIFE'S WORK"

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Introduction

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the professional withdrawal (at the end of 1933) of Gustav Kolb (1870–1938). He is considered the founder of the 'Erlangen System' of open care.

Objectives/Aims

Nearly 80 years after Gustav Kolb was forced to retire (1st March 1934), the poster pays tribute to Gustav Kolb's 'Life's work', by delineating the formation, active period and the fall of his 'Erlangen System' in its historical context.

Method

Relevant archive materials and secondary literature were assessed.

Results

Beginning in 1914, Gustav Kolb, as Director of the psychiatric facility in Erlangen (1911–1933) introduced care of the emotionally ill in their own families. In 1930, 4,200 of the 770,000 residents in a catchment area covering about 3,200 square kilometers were being treated in open care. The 'Erlangen System' was the largest organization of its kind in Germany. Kolb opposed the national-socialist health politics, withdrew professionally in 1933 and died 5 years later.

Discussion

Gustav Kolb's organizational thoroughness, with its creation of a central register of people under open care in the Erlangen System, provided considerable biogenetic information. Tragically, this was abused as an important source in carrying out the national-socialist law for prevention of genetically-impaired offspring (14.07.1933).

Conclusion

Individual efforts to reestablish open care facilities after 1945 were not implemented. It was not until during the sociopsychiatric movement of the 1960s that Kolb's concept could achieve a Renaissance, although it was unnamed and unrecognized at the time.