

Bibliotek for Læger

A journal devoted to medical history, ethics, philosophy and clinical theory, founded in 1809

Ellids Kristensen:

The treatment of sex offenders in Denmark.

Bibl Læger 2007;199:5–14.

A temporary initiative to treat convicted sex offenders was launched on October 1st 1997 and subsequently made permanent in 2001. The initiative is divided in two: Treatment as an alternative to imprisonment and treatment as a supplement to punishment. The treatment methods are psychiatric/sexological in nature, and they primarily consist of individual and/or group therapy in addition to social-pedagogical efforts and possible pharmacological intervention. In 2006, an anonymous telephone hotline for adults with sexual interest in children was established at the Clinic of Sexology in Copenhagen. The purpose of this hotline was to motivate persons in danger of perpetrating sex crimes to seek treatment.

Morten Ebbe Juul Nielsen:

Philosophical considerations on the treatment of sex offenders.

Bibl Læger 2007;199:15–43.

This article deals with central juridical and moral challenges pertaining to the (mandatory) medicinal treatment of violent sex offenders. A major survey of the rate of recidivism for offenders that have undergone “chemical castration” at Anstalten ved Herstedvester (the Danish institution for psychiatric treatment and confinement of serious sex offenders) shows a dramatic fall in recidivism for such offenders. This is consistent with other major international findings: regarded solely in terms of recidivism, chemical castration is vastly superior to any other treatment. However, there is a host of concerns relating to this practice. The article presents a range of philosophical quandaries and criticisms of chemical treatment, and demonstrates that none of them effectively show the practice to be inconsistent with fair sentencing in a liberal democracy. Furthermore, the article analyses and rejects an influential Kantian critique raised against chemical castration, namely that it is inconsistent with the maxim that one should always treat persons as ends in themselves. The analysis shows that, morally speaking, it is not only possible, but actually likely that serious sex offenders ought to consent to the treatment. In combination, the arguments presented should assuage legal and moral fears about the justification of medical treatment of sexual offenders.

Marianne Scheele & Jørgen Rygaard:

A life in research. Niels A. Lassen 1926–1997.

Bibl Læger 2007;199:44–67.

An overview of the life and work of the famed Danish brain researcher Niels A. Lassen (1926–1997) is provided through memories of his friends and collaborators.