Systems Approach to Social Networks

The conceptualisation of the human body into systems e.g. digestive systems, circulatory system, autonomic nervous system assists in the treatment of individual people. Thinking sociometrically can assist in the treatment of social problems.

The system concept used in the management of cases can include the following four systems:

CHANGE AGENT SYSTEM
The initiators of planned change. Usually "our unit", but at times other agencies - e.g. Child and Family Guidance Centre. General practitioner. Consultant. Clarify who is the main change agent system for each client system.

THE CLIENT SYSTEMS
The individual, dyad, family, group or organisation that is the expected beneficiary of the change.

ACTION SYSTEMS
The various people that effect the change - this can of course include the client or the change agent but also any other available resources - who will do what? Who will talk to whom.

TARGET SYSTEMS
The people or groups that need to be changed in order to achieve the goals - For example to assist a couple (client system) it may be the GP who is identified as the person best able to engage one of the parties and to make the referral to the therapist. Or the person who has the power to employ more staff.

It is important to note that in one client system there may be a variety of goals and that for EACH goal there will be a different system to identify.

E.G.

A patient may wish to improve her relationship with her husband (goal 1). She may wish to have her children back from a foster placement (goal 2). Each of these goals may have quite different CHANGE AGENT, TARGET, ACTION and CLIENT systems. Note: that each goal is discussed with the client and the practitioner until an understanding is reached, a plan is made and written down.


Walter Logeman walter@psybernet.co.nz