

The Historical Archive of Veronese Psychiatry.

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The archive, established in 2006 thanks to the forward-looking vision of Professor Michele Tansella, with the support of the University of Verona, the Integrated University Hospital, and the ULSS 20. The archive proposed to save from the dispersion a documentation of very high interest, made up of medical records, texts and paper material of various kinds coming from the former provincial hospital of San Giacomo. It is a documentation collected in various locations that is now available to scholars, and offers the possibility of reconstructing the social and scientific overview of the mental hospital situation in the province before the advent of the new psychiatric approach to mental illness that led to the closure of asylums. With the closure of the San Giacomo Mental Hospital, in fact, much of the historical and archival material went inexorably dispersed, in particular the furnishings, diagnostic tools, photographs, restraints, work tools for the treatment of health, numerous volumes of the library. The few buildings that have remained have been partially restored, some are in a state of advanced decay. Many initiatives and projects could emerge from having centralized documentation on the Verona asylum history in a single location. In short, the Historical Archives should become, also through the involvement of interested scholars and researchers, a meeting point and initiative on the topic of mental hospital history, but also, more generally, the history of psychiatry in the province of Verona. In addition to the need to overcome the dispersion of the archives, unifying them in a single location, there was another aspect that was at the base of the project to create the archive: to ensure that in the place where so many lives and so many misfortunes have intertwined, where many doctors and nurses have spent a lifetime of work remained an evident and conscious sign that testified the value of this memory. For this reason it is important that the archive is in the area where there was the San Giacomo Mental Hospitals, indeed in a building that since the early '900 welcomed patients of male observation. In this way we begin to keep alive the memory of what was a small city, then surrounded by walls (built, among other things by the patients themselves) and the fields of the agricultural colony, far from Verona, but always present in its history, despite the inevitable attempts to remove that "madness" has always stimulated.