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SPECIAL ARTICLE

Stigma of Mental Illness as Cause of Divorce in Byzantium

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ABSTRACT

In Byzantium mentally ill persons were stigmatized, despite the fact that they could live normally. This stigma consisted a very serious problem not only for the patients themselves, but also for their families.

Through the legislation of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian and also the Leo's VI the Wise (9th – 10th A.C.) legislation, mental illness was a main health cause of divorce and it concerned both males and females.

During these years men were treated different than women, which had to wait five years in order to get a divorce. On the opposite men had to wait only three years to get a divorce for the cause of mentally retarded wife.

Key Words: mental illness, divorce, Byzantium