

Title: Working psychotherapeutically with affect in offenders?

Presenters: Jessica Yakeley, Ellen Gunst, Jochem Willemsen, Marion Verkade

Moderator: Felicitas Rost, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, UK

Abstract: In this panel, we will address the delicate but important question of the role of psychotherapy in the rehabilitation process of offenders. There is currently an interest in working therapeutically with affect in offenders, and different therapeutic models are being investigated. This panel will report on some aspects of this work. In the first presentation, Jessica Yakeley will discuss the challenges and obstacles to implementing a randomized controlled trial of MBT for antisocial personality disorder in the UK Criminal Justice System. In the second presentation, Ellen Gunst will present and compare two case studies to offer insight in how emotion-focused experiential psychotherapy (EFEP) changes affect regulation in sex offenders. In the third presentation, Jochem Willemsen will explore the therapeutic trajectory of one case study, with a particular focus on the struggle with experiences of victimization and perpetration in a sex offender. In the fourth presentations, Marion Verkade will present a statistical test of an integrated model of conscience.

Keywords: forensic psychotherapy, offender, affect regulation, mentalization

Paper in a panel

Title: Implementing a randomized controlled trial of MBT for antisocial personality disorder in the UK Criminal Justice System

Author: Jessica Yakeley, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, UK

Abstract:

Aim: There is a lack of RCTs investigating the efficacy of psychological interventions for ASPD. Furthermore, within implementation or translational science, few studies have focussed on the implementation of research in criminal justice systems. Since 2013, as part of the UK Offender Personality Disorder Pathway, we have implemented and developed new services across 14 sites in England and Wales offering mentalization-based treatment (MBT) to male violent offenders with antisocial personality disorder under the management of the National Probation Service. In 2015, led by Peter Fonagy at UCL, we were successful in being granted funding by the National Institute of Health Research to conduct an RCT comparing MBT to Probation as Usual (PAU).

Methods: This is a multi-site, two-arm RCT, with participants randomly allocated in a 1:1 ratio to receive either PAU only or MBT plus PAU. The setting is the National Probation Service. The target population are male offenders aged over 21 years subject to statutory supervision by the National Probation Service and who fulfil DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for ASPD.

Results: The RCT is currently being implemented and participants are being randomized across the 14 sites. To date we have been looking at the significant challenges and obstacles to implementing the trial. These include structural reorganisation of the CJS, probation officers lack of knowledge about research and reluctance to refer offenders for randomisation, clinical governance issues and difficulty in engaging the offenders in the trial.

Conclusions: This is work in progress but our findings to date indicate that the CJS as a whole can be conceptualized as a non-mentalizing system and this will be the one of main barriers to the implementation and evaluation of a mentalizing intervention.

Keywords: Randomized controlled trial, mentalization-based treatment, antisocial personality disorder

Paper in a panel

Title: Affect Regulation as factor in sex offender treatment – findings of two contrasting clients

Authors: Ellen Gunst (Ghent University, Belgium and P.C. Sint-Amandus, Beernem); Mattias Desmet (Ghent University, Belgium); Jochem Willemsen (University of Essex, UK)

Abstract:

Aim: At the present state of affairs, forensic treatment of sexual offenders predominantly focuses on cognitive change. Some theoretical models and research findings, however, suggest that emotional processes underlie offenders' cognitive schema's and behaviour and thus should be addressed in therapy as well. The present study addresses two major research questions: 1. Does emotional change occur throughout a comprehensive inpatient psychotherapy program for sex offenders? 2. Is there an incremental value of an emotion-focused experiential psychotherapy (EFEP) in such a program?

Methods: We use a quasi-experimental ABCA single case design in a clinical setting to address these questions (A = pre-treatment baseline, B=treatment program without EFEP, C=treatment program with EFEP, A=post-treatment baseline). The Difficulties of Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) and the Observer Measure of Affect Regulation (OMAR) will be used on respectively a weekly and monthly basis to assess emotional change. Furthermore, changes in negative affectivity will be assessed by means of mass spectrometry of saliva samples on a monthly basis. The data will be analysed by means of mixed quantitative-qualitative methods.

Results: In this paper we will present the findings of two single case studies that are contrasting in terms of under and over regulation of affect.

Discussion: Strengths of this study include detailed analysis of the data at the level of different single cases, multi-method assessment of process and outcome, and the use of a biological outcome-indicator. Shortcomings of the study include the lack of correlations with outcome in terms of recidivism.

Keywords: Affect regulation, sex offender, emotion-focused experiential psychotherapy, case studies

Paper in a panel

Title: Victim or perpetrator? A case study of the treatment of a sex offender

Authors: Jochem Willemsen, University of Essex, UK

Abstract:

Aim: This presentation will discuss the work that needs to be done in relation to experiences of perpetration and victimization in the treatment of (sex) offenders.

Method: A patient was followed during his two-year inpatient treatment in a psychiatric facility for sex offenders. During the treatment, he was interviewed every two months, using the Client Change Interview. The interviews offer a longitudinal perspective on the change process from a patient point of view. The patient was also interviewed six months after completion of treatment when he was released in the community.

Results: A recurrent theme in the twenty interviews is how the patient is struggling with questions about his experiences of perpetration and victimization: Am I a victim or a perpetrator? How are these related? Can I talk about victimization in a group of perpetrators? It emerges that therapeutic progress in relation to these questions is an important part of his treatment process.

Discussion: In the discussion, the findings from this case study will be linked to a larger qualitative study into therapeutic factors we published in 2016. Moreover, we will link our findings to the 2013 qualitative meta-synthesis by Walji et al. in which it was found that therapeutic work in relation to experiences of perpetration and victimization is crucial for the treatment to be successful. Our case study allows to articulate more precisely what this change process consists in.

Keywords: sex offender, client change interview, case study, victimization

Paper in a panel

Title: Conscience as a regulatory function: An integrative theory put to test

Authors: Marion Verkade, GGZ Drenthe, The Netherlands

Abstract:

Aim: In this study an emotion-based, developmental theory of conscience (Schalkwijk, 2011a; 2016) is examined. Conscience is operationalised as a regulatory function, developed from the interaction between the capacity for empathy, self-conscious emotions as guilt and shame, and moral reasoning. It is a psychic function for evaluating one's own behaviour and identity, to ensure psychic balance and maintain social affiliation. Day-to-day functioning of this ongoing self-evaluation fluctuates with changing circumstances and over time. Schalkwijk and colleagues (2016) put this theory to test in a questionnaire survey with delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents, by comparing them on all combined constituents of conscience.

Method: The present study aims to replicate their findings in an adult forensic psychiatric sample. To this end, 48 delinquent and 50 non-delinquent psychiatric patients were compared using the same measures of conscience.

Results: Delinquents demonstrate less affective empathy but an equal amount of cognitive empathy; they show less identification with others, less personal distress in seeing others suffer, less shame and shame-proneness, and lower levels of moral reasoning than non-delinquents. In coping with self-conscious emotions, delinquents use the same amount of externalising but less internalising coping strategies.

Discussion: Findings also suggest that conscience matures over time, to the point where guilt is dominant over shame and internalised coping with self-conscious emotions dominates externalised coping.

Keywords: conscious, self-regulation, adult forensic patients, empathy, guilt