

Let's Talk about Biodiversity with Patients !

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Background

Biodiversity-health links

- Public health **benefits recognised**. (1-3)
- Rarely addressed in healthcare** practice as key health determinant. (4-6)

Aim

- Explore **patients' representations** of the links between biodiversity / nature and health.
- Identify ways to **integrate biodiversity health determinant into clinical practice**.

Methodology

Approach

- Qualitative & inductive.
- Switzerland-Belgium.

Data collection

- 40 semi-structured patient interviews.

Data analysis

- Transcription.
- Coding and thematic analysis.

Results

Biodiversity & health links

Biodiversity is perceived as:

- Essential but hard to conceptualize.
- Scientific term, abstract, intangible.
- Associated with living organisms *in general*.

"I have the feeling, I'm **not sure there's really a cause-and-effect link**, but I feel that **when biodiversity is doing well**, it means the whole system is doing well. And typically, **us too**." (W. 50)

Biodiversity impacts on health are **not clearly defined** and does **not resonate with patients' experiences**.

Patients shift to

Contact with nature & well-being links

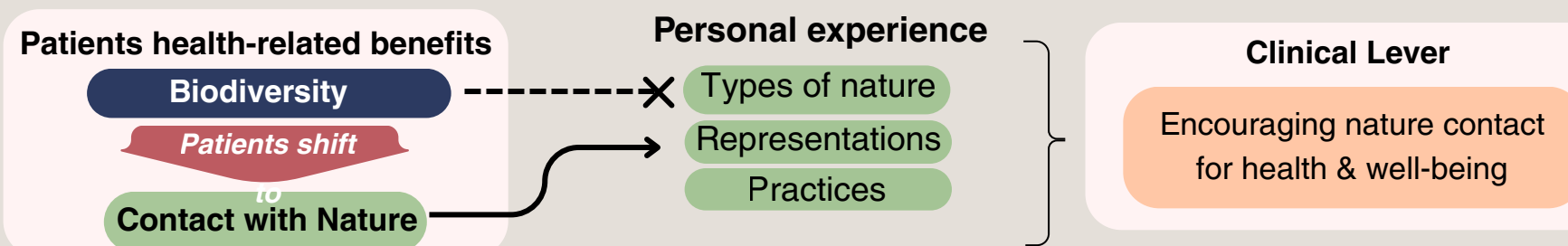
- Contact with nature** is more tangible and daily experienced.
- Strong association with **well-being and mental health**.
- A wide variety of natural spaces**: forest, parks, mountains, gardens, rivers.
- A wide variety of practices**: walking, meditation, gardening, social activities, birds watching.
- A strong sensory and aesthetic dimension** emerges: sounds, smells, textures.

"in the **forest**, what I also find **soothing is the sound**. For example, if you're walking alongside a river, you **hear the sound of the water or the sound of the wind in the trees**, the trees creaking. I find these are sounds **that calm you down, that make you feel good**." (M. 26)

"I think there are also more and more **cases of depression**. So because of the general stress, but also **because we're taking less and less time to listen to nature**." (W. 43)

Patients **rely on personal and practical experiences** to express nature's benefits on health and well-being.

Fig. 1: Patients' experiences of nature as a lever for clinical practice



Discussion

- "**Contact with nature**" is more tangible than biodiversity and directly **evokes personal experiences**: places, practices and feelings that are **easier to connect to well-being and mental health**.
- Drawing on **individual experiences** can serve as a **lever to promote nature-based activities and its health benefits**.

In practice

- Encourage nature-based practices** to support health promotion.
- Prescribe nature as a **tailored intervention**: explore patients' preferred spaces, sensory connections and personal situation.
- Use nature experiences as a **gateway to discuss broader health benefits in primary care** (cardiovascular, chronic diseases, oncology, respiratory).

Conclusion & perspective

Where does nature-contact fit within health promotion in clinical practice ?

- In GP-patient consultations.
- Consultations with other healthcare professionals (nurses, physiotherapists).
- Through health promotion materials (brochures, posters, advertisements).

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