

**Title:** Psychotherapist development during and after training: four perspectives on studying change and its predictors.

**Organizer and Moderator:** Erkki Heinonen, University of Oslo, Norway.

**Discussant:** Bernhard Strauss, Jena University Hospital, Germany.

**Abstract:**

While therapists have been shown to differ in their effectiveness, little knowledge still exists on how effective psychotherapists develop. Accordingly, the present panel brings together research programs with differing designs and methods, but a common aim: To shed light on the professional and personal journey of psychotherapists during their training and afterwards. In the first paper, using the large-scale SPRISTAD study data from 9 countries, Pirke et al. study how therapist trainees' self-experienced difficulties change over their first year of practice and its predictors. In the second paper, using a single-case design with video observation and interviews, Hoff and colleagues investigate how a student therapist's relational competence develops over one therapy and supervision process, and how it is reflected in the therapist and patient's nonverbal communication. Third, de Condé presents on an ongoing doctoral study – incorporating interviews, qualitative meta-analysis, and surveys – exploring how personal and professional development of therapists are intertwined through their career. Finally, Berning et al. present on a recently initiated, randomized- controlled-design study of how deliberate practice and structured feedback improve the interpersonal competences of psychotherapist trainees.

**Keywords:** Quantitative & qualitative method, Systemic Case Studies, Therapist training and development.

## **Paper in a panel:**

**Title:** Difficulties of psychotherapy trainees in their practice over time related to training elements.

**Autors:** Jan Pirke (Universität Witten/Herdecke, Germany), David Orlinsky (University of Chicago, USA), Michael Helge Rønnestad (University of Oslo, Norway) et Ulrike Willutzki (Universität Witten/Herdecke, Germany).

## **Abstract:**

*Aim:* Research on therapists' difficulties in their psychotherapeutic work has shown differences between psychotherapists in different experience groups: In a sample of senior therapists such difficulties were correlated positively with outcome (Nissen-Lie et al., 2013), whereas in a sample of junior psychotherapists a negative correlation between professional self-doubt and outcome was found (Odyniec et al., 2019). In a comparison of differently experienced therapists, Orlinsky & Rønnestad (2005) found that perceived difficulties declined with increasing work experience. Initial results from the SPRISTAD project show that patterns of difficulty are relatively stable over time. The influence of different training elements on the development of perceived difficulties in practice remains unclear.

*Methods:* 114 trainees from 9 different countries rated their professional difficulties in practice the beginning of their therapeutic work with patients, after 6 months, and after 12 months. Difficulties in Practice were rated on an 11-point scale from 0='never' to 10='very often', assessing trainees' professional self-doubt (e.g., "Lacking in confidence that you can have a beneficial effect on a client") resp. "trainees' personal negative reaction to patients (e.g., "Unable to have much real empathy for a client's experiences."). Group comparisons are made with respect to other training elements as theoretical seminars, self-therapy and supervision.

*Results:* Over the course of the first year of practice, trainees' difficulties in their therapeutic practice decrease significantly; this applies to both professional self-doubt and negative personal reactions.

*Discussion:* Implications of the findings for training and professional development will be discussed.

**Keywords:** Practice-training-research networks, Therapist training and development.

**Paper in a panel:**

**Title:** Nonverbal aspects of relational competence: A naturalistic, multi-method single case-study of changes in nonverbal behavior in a student therapist's training process.

**Autors:** Cecilia Hillestad Hoff, Hanne Weie Oddli and Hanne Strømme (University of Oslo, Norway).

**Abstract:**

*Aim:* To examine the development of relational competence during a psychotherapy training process and the corresponding supervision process and explore whether this development is possible to trace in the therapist's nonverbal behavior.

*Method:* This is a single-case study, using a multi-method approach where novel research strategies based on observations of video recordings of naturalistic therapy and supervision sessions are combined with traditional interviews. The data analysis follows the principles of reflexive thematic analysis.

*Results:* Preliminary results indicate marked changes in the student therapist's nonverbal behavior, manifested as a decreased verbal tempo, a more muted tone of her voice, and a more relaxed body language and posture. These changes seem to occur in parallel with similar changes in the client's nonverbal expressions. Findings from the qualitative interview suggest that the therapist was aware of the nonverbal communication between herself and her client throughout the process, but that she did not reflect on how she could use this awareness as a source of information, or as an advantage point for clinical interventions. Neither was this explicitly discussed during supervision.

*Discussion:* The results provide insight into aspects of the communication that go beyond what is expressed verbally. The question of how supervisors preferably should include nonverbal communication in supervision is discussed.

**Keywords:** Relationship factors, Therapist training and development.

**Paper in a panel:**

**Title:** Multi-method study on the process of the therapists' personal and professional development.

**Authors:** Hubert de Condé, Emmanuelle Zech and Jochem Willemsen (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium).

**Abstract:**

*Aim:* This presentation will lay out the progress of my doctoral research project on therapists' personal and professional development (PPD) and how those aspects integrate into one another. PPD can be defined as an integration of the professional skills and personal work required to reach out to the client, generating a process of change and enabling one to face the challenges of professional life. This concept is part of the integrated perspective that equates professional skills with the personal development of the therapist, in which the development process, integrating these two facets, can be a protective factor against the negative consequences of professional challenges.

*Method:* The first study is based on interviews with experienced therapists. They were asked about their personal and professional development. The second study is a qualitative meta-analysis on the influence of the reflective practice on clinical practice and PPD. The third study (ongoing) is a large-scale survey on PPD in therapists.

*Results:* The first study revealed three themes highlighting that PPD is linked to relationship to theory, continuous training, and motivation to practice the profession of therapist. The second study showed lots of positive effects of reflexivity on PPD and clinical work. The third study might illustrate significant events reported by therapists and demonstrate if there is a connection between reflexivity and the way of being among therapists with different levels of practice.

*Discussion:* The outcomes of the three studies highlight the need to recognize personal development as an integral part of psychotherapists' professional development.

**Keywords:** Quantitative & qualitative method, Therapist training and development.

## **Paper in a panel:**

**Title:** Effects of deliberate practice and feedback in psychotherapy training (DeeP).

**Autors:** Anna Berning (University Hospital Heidelberg, Germany, Stefan Sell (University Hospital Heidelberg, Germany) Bernard Strauss (Jena University Hospital, Germany) and Svenja Taubner (University Hospital Heidelberg, Germany)

## **Abstract:**

*Background:* Interpersonal competences of psychotherapists seem to play an important role for the success of therapy. Therapists with high interpersonal competences show interpersonal behavioral patterns that help them manage difficult therapy situations appropriately (Anderson, 2013). One way to strengthen these competences are correspondingly focused workshops during therapy training. As previous studies have shown, training methods seem to have a major impact on actual learning success. Thereby Deliberate Practice (Ericsson & Lehmann, 1996) and Structured Feedback have shown to be promising didactic tools.

*Aim:* We aim to illustrate the structure of possible workshops with a focus on strengthening interpersonal skills. Thereby we include elements of the Alliance-Focused-Training (AFT; Safran & Muran, 2003), deliberate practice and structured feedback.

*Methods:* The underlying study uses a randomized-controlled-design with three intervention groups (Deliberate Practice, Structured Feedback, combination of both) and one control group (didactic training). Each group has to complete three workshops. In addition to a didactic introduction to interpersonal skills, the framework of all workshops is based on the core elements of AFT. The center of the workshops is the respective experimental condition. Deliberate Practice is implemented through the use of Simulation Patients (SP), through which trainees can practice how to handle complex therapy situations. Structured feedback is operationalized through the Facilitative Interpersonal Skills Rating Method (FIS; Anderson & Patterson, 2013).

*Discussion:* The status of the study as well as the initial findings regarding fidelity and satisfaction with the workshops will be discussed at SPR Dublin 2023.

**Keywords:** Deliberate practice, Therapist training and development.