

BPtK Webinar 29.09.2020: NPCE Member Meeting and Symposium "Mobile health apps in psychotherapy in Europe"

General view

Analysis of Pandemic Context

The actual sanitarium crisis and the next future economic crisis, bring us, here and now, the need to share our experience at a national level in order to understand better how we can make an effective improvement on the health care policy not only at a national level, but also at an European Level.

We have heard the discourse of Ursula Von der Leyen, in which she underlined as the health policy became one of the priorities for the European Union.

Visibility must be given to psychotherapy as an important tool, to prevent most serious consequences for the mental health european citizens in the present and in the future, this should be our target.

Proposal to set up a Task Force

In our view, NPCE should set up a Task Force on Psychotherapeutic approach for the pandemic crisis, gathering information and contributions from different countries in order to follow up on the emergent mental health crisis situation in Europe, and to introduce psychotherapy as part of an answer at a National and European level.

Portugal Report

Session 1:

In Portugal, before the covid19 pandemic, the psychotherapists use video conference sessions in some specific situations: when the client was abroad or couldn't attend a session, psychotherapists and clients could decide to do a video conference session.

Some previous digital experience site/platform for specific population likely for emigrants, ex: <https://pt.rumo.solutions/>,

During the lockdown, the psychotherapist in Portugal started to use video conferences as a way to conduct psychotherapy sessions.

And now, after the lockdown, some clients prefer videoconference psychotherapy sessions because it is safer, but others as soon as allowed they prefer face to face sessions, it depends on each client.

During the lockdown sometimes it was difficult to do video conference sessions for privacy reasons and with some clients the psychotherapy had to stop because they did not have a reserved space where the rest of the family could not show up at some point of the session or be afraid of being heard what they were saying.

Are internet-based programmes (digital health apps) used by psychotherapists, e.g. in the treatment of anxiety disorders, depression or addictions?

Yes, but there are several platforms and apps but in general in an early phase of development and most of them only for scheduled appointments.

It is relevant to assure some common requirements must digital health apps meet in order to be safe about confidentiality

In our view it is preferable if the digital apps are designed with the contributions of a multidisciplinary team, including psychotherapists, but also with other health related professionals.

It is necessary to evaluate its effectiveness.

Which professional standards must be met when using digital health apps (e.g. prior diagnosis in personal contact, therapy monitoring)?

Using a digital health app should be a joint decision between the psychotherapist and the client.

It is essential to have personal contact with a psychotherapist.

It makes no sense to use a digital health app without integrating it into a psychotherapeutic process.

Free sessions integrated in helplines during the pandemic had been available in Portugal as in other European countries.

Several institutions have launch online emergency line or internet-based platform.

After this uncertain time...no one knows when this is going to happen, this kind of service should be remunerated, in order to avoid some kind of professional exploitation.

In our opinion, the video conference sessions should have the same price as face to face sessions.

Session 2

What is currently happening in psychotherapeutic care?

Legal basis for qualification and practice of the profession

There is no Profession as a Psychotherapist in Portugal.

There is not a legal regulation on Psychotherapy activity or act.

Only Medical Doctors and Psychologists are allowed to practice clinical activities in the field of Mental Health Care, under the rule of Portuguese Order of Medical Doctors (OM) or Portuguese Order of Psychologists (OPP).

A protocole of minimal required training was established between OPP and several Psychotherapeutic Training Associations.

Since 2016 a Federation of Associations and Psychotherapy Schools has been defined as a minimal standard in order to be recognized as professional training. However, the psychotherapeutic act didn't become part of the clinical acts of the Health Care Basic Law, discussed and approved in 2019, because the lack of a national professional association recognized, of the Portuguese Federation of Psychotherapy (FEPPSI) as a *Professional Order*.

What is the supply policy?

There are only available Psychotherapeutic Care in the public service for specific issues like drug or alcoholic dependences or mainly complementary in the general hospital and Psychiatric departments.

At the primary care health services there are some possibilities to have sessions with a Clinical Psychologist but only a few professionals are available.

What is the professional policy?

Psychotherapy as a specialty for Psychologists or Medical Doctors.

Are therapists in your country allowed to prescribe treatments?

No

How has Corona changed psychotherapy?

A lot, because the face to face work is very limited, since the beginning of lockdown. Nowadays, either in the public or the private sector there is mostly telework. We are experiencing a very important change. Some web platforms are being launched in order to cope with the emergency situation. Others services are provided by a sort of *social clinic* in order to work with a population with low resources, immigrants or homeless.