

BPtK Study: Waiting Times for outpatient Psychotherapeutic Services

SUMMARY

A recent survey of the German Chamber of Psychotherapists (BPtK) amongst more than 9,000 resident psychotherapists has shown that mentally ill individuals in Germany are often unable to find a psychotherapist who can provide treatment within an appropriate period of time.

According to this survey, the average waiting time for an initial interview with a psychotherapist is three months. After this interview some 50 percent of patients begin a psychotherapy. Between initial interview and start of treatment (which is subject to approval) close to another three months usually go by. The treatment thus usually only starts almost six months after the initial contact.

Survey Results in Detail: Enquiries, Treatment Capacities and Waiting Times

- Every month an average of 17.7 patients enquire about psychotherapeutic treatment. However, resident psychotherapists only offer an average of 4.2 initial interviews per month.
- Over a timespan of six months an average of 12.9 patients per resident psychotherapist begin psychotherapeutic treatment. Hence 51.6 percent of the patients that are offered an initial interview enter therapy.
- The waiting lists that are maintained by 54 percent of all psychotherapists indicate that in Germany 71.9 percent of patients have to wait for more than three weeks for their initial interview because of the lack of capacity in psychotherapeutic private practices. Close to one third (31.5 percent) have to accept waiting times of over three months.
- Waiting times differed greatly between the individual German states as well as between urban and rural regions. In big cities patients have to wait two to three months for an initial interview with a psychotherapist while the waiting time in the countryside is close to four months.
- Many of these differences can be explained by the differences in supply density in urban and rural regions. In the German city states (Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen) there is an average of 50 resident psychotherapists per 100,000 inhabitants while in underpopulated areas between 10 and 12 psychotherapists are available for 100,000 people.