

Conference Agenda

Session

SYMP_4: SYMPOSIUM 4

Time: Thursday, 08/Sept/2022: 3:00pm - 4:30pm

Location: THEO_1

Session Chair: **Kia Thanopoulou**, Psychiatric Hospital of Attika

Presentations

Systemic interventions for physical injury: Promoting biopsychosocial model.

Chair(s): **Kia Thanopoulou** (Family Therapy Unit, Psychiatric Hospital of Athens, Greece)

Discussant(s): **Katia Charalambaki** (Systemic Thinking and Psychotherapy Journal, HE.S.T.A.F.T.A, Athens, Greece)

General Hospital of Attica, KAT is a medical-centered hospital that treats patients with physical injuries after acute accidents that usually result in disabilities or even death. In the last four years, systemic oriented psychologists, supervised by a systemic psychotherapist, have been trying to address the therapy needs of patients and their families within the context of a biopsychosocial model. Inspired by medical family therapy, they structured interventions that would facilitate collaboration with physicians and help patients and families deal with the traumatic injury, health effects and complications, by making all necessary adjustments, so as to come to terms with a changed life. A basic concern underlying these interventions was to create a more humanized hospital for staff, patients and their families, a safe place of care that could promote agency and connection to such a critical time in their life.

Presentations of the Symposium

Applying systemic theory and practice in a hospital setting. The intensive care unit case.

Kyriaki Vagena, Anastasia Kasiola, Vasiliki Panou

KAT Attica General Hospital, Athens, Greece

Systemic theory and practice were applied in the ICU of KAT Hospital from 2019, with an innovative, for the Greek standards, intervention, designed by the Psychologists' Office in collaboration with B' ICU. A multilevel support and empowerment of relatives was achieved, inspired from the basic principles of systemic and medical family therapy. The ICU is a closed system with a specific structure and rules. Through this intervention ICU is repositioned and allows the exchange of information with relatives. The main purpose was to raise awareness and give information to relatives, aiming self-care and management of their patient's course. As initially assumed, relatives (N=78) showed increased levels of stress, anxiety and depression symptomatology, measured by DASS 21. Four interdisciplinary, psycho-educational cycles, with five weekly meetings, were held. Individual and family support was provided when it was necessary. Leaflets were designed and distributed to the relatives who did not attend the meetings.

The injury of the patient's body as an indication of the family dynamic

Vasiliki Panou, Anastasia Kasiola, Kyriaki Vagena

KAT Attica General Hospital, Athens, Greece

Working with patients who have suffered an accident or injury and their families at the General Hospital of Attica KAT in Greece, we have often been confronted with a loss in the patient's body that causes chain reactions within the wider family. What was particularly striking to us was the fact that the physical disability (paraplegia, quadriplegia) that accompanied the injury, was in the process linked to the wider family dynamics. Although initially inscribable at a level of randomness under the influence of external unforeseen factors, physical disabilities brought to the surface conflicts and dysfunctional developmental transitions. The main purpose of this qualitative study in the case of the 20 families that were studied was to associate the high levels of expressed emotion observed in the patient's family and measured by the Five-minute Speech Sample, with the patient's course and physiological recovery.

Building a new identity after physical injury and loss. A case study

Anastasia Kasiola, Vasiliki Panou, Kyriaki Vagena

Attica General Hospital, Athens, Greece

In a trauma hospital a psychologist deals with severe accidents and their consequences such as disability, loss of health or a body limb, even death. This leads to the need to design proper interventions that can guide both patients and their families to manage the new situation. A case study is presented, concerning a 52-year-old woman who had an amputation following a work accident. The psychotherapeutic process took place during the COVID-19 period. Throughout the days of hospitalization, a set of new narratives were constructed, and new meanings were ascribed to the new situation, all with the aim to help the patient deal with her new reality. That process has led to multilevel changes in her identity. This case study demonstrates that effective communication and expression of emotions can play a crucial role in the family stability and the mitigation to adverse health outcomes.

Some reflections on the supervision of psychologists in a general hospital setting.

Kia Thanopoulou

Family Therapy Unit, Psychiatric Hospital of Athens, Greece

In a medical-centered hospital that treats physical injuries after acute accidents, psychotherapy work is often challenging and frustrating, done under conditions of extreme urgency, intensity, unpredictability and time constriction. The supervision of psychologists has to take into consideration the context of the hospital with the rigidity and the fragmentation of the dominant medical discourse that reproduces the historical dualism of mind and body. The supervision group explored the application of systems theory to medical practice, and built collaborative bridges with physicians and other health care providers. We worked based on an image: "body helpless and stuck". Through the construction of a series of interventions for the patient and his/her family that helped them achieve a sense of agency and better connection, the image evolved. This image had many analogies to the supervisee's attempt to find their own voice and construct their own identity in the medical setting of the hospital.