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Assoziation Schweizer Psychotherapeutinnen und
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Digital Media Used in Psychotherapy in Switzerland

Personal Opinion

I think it's inevitable to discuss and later to regulate the use of new media in Psychotherapy. It's already in common use in every day life and we cannot avoid that it also will have an impact on Psychotherapy.

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Law and Regulations

The law of the profession as psychologist (Psychologieberufegesetz) has no regulations concerning internet based forms of psychotherapy.

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Law and regulations

Tarmed (the system that provides codes to reimburse psychotherapy via health insurance) allows only 4 hours psychotherapy via phone per half year. All other forms won't be reimbursed by the health insurance.

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Law and regulations

Psychotherapy with self paying patients or with reimbursement by special health insurances (Zusatzversicherung) has no regulations, only what the professional associations require in their guidelines.

Our association approves with no psychotherapy via e-mail and advises video-conference only via safe channels like the Hin-video-conference tool.



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Special Conditions

During the lock down due to the Corona Virus pandemic there were no regulations in the beginning.

Many psychotherapists performed their sessions via phone or video-conference using Skype or Zoom mostly.

Guidelines of the BAG (Federal Health Department) after a month of lock down:

6 hours per half year are reimbursed by the health insurance all other ways of communication won't be reimbursed.

After the lock down it's again 4 hours that are reimbursed.

They are not prepared to adjust the regulations to the demands of the new media.

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The Practice Since COVID 19

Many psychotherapists still perform the sessions with the clients via phone or video-conference calls but reimburse it as face to face sessions.

Many patients are glad to have other means of communication as the face to face sessions.

But the general feedback of my patients was, that they prefer the face to face sessions to any other virtual form.

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Digital Health Apps

They are not officially permitted.

But the Health Insurances have started to develop Apps for example for Depression or Anxiety Disorder in cooperation with technical colleges and Universities for their clients to sort out those with mental issues.

The official politics are way behind in that respect.

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Use of Digital Health Apps

They are used by the younger patients, searched via Internet or App Stores and mostly tried out without consulting professionals.

My patients found some of the Apps helpful, but didn't use them regularly.

One of the technical colleges in Zurich is doing a research on the existing health Apps and plans to give out a recommendation list, which ones are reliable and safe.

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Requirements

There are no official requirements.

Our association has started to discuss Health Apps. We agreed on the following rules:

- latest research results must be included
- only use of accredited psychotherapy methods
- recommendation of professional treatment in addition to the use of the App
- data safety and prevention of any misuse must be guaranteed

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Update on Psychotherapy in Switzerland

Law and Regulations

The law of the profession as psychologist (Psychologieberufegesetz, PsyG) is the legal basis of psychotherapy since the 18th of March 2011.

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Law and regulations

Qualifications according PsyG:

- Study of Psychology
- Education in a psychotherapy method in a legally approved institute or at the University with theory, supervision, self experience and 2 years of practice in a psychiatric clinic or practice
- Continued training

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Reforms

They are working on a revision of the PsyG which is retarded.

According to our informations they plan to reduce the Psychotherapy Institutes in the second round of legal approval further to diminish the Psychotherapy landscape taking Germany as an example.

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Special Form of Psychotherapy

«Delegation», which allows the psychotherapist to reimburse her/his psychotherapy via health insurance:

- The psychiatrist is responsible for a psychotherapist and her/his work.
- The psychotherapist is only allowed to see patients in the practice of the psychiatrist and has to be employed by the psychiatrist, who pays his part of the insurances necessary for working and can take parts of the income of the psychotherapist to cover his expenses or earn additional money.
- There are no other explicit regulations for this kind of co-work, which gives way to a lot of misuse and exploitation of psychotherapists. **• A • S • P •**

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Reform of the „Delegation“ System

The psychotherapy associations like the ASP have applied to the government to change the «delegation» system.

The BAG (Federal Department of Health) has made a proposal of the «Anordnungsprinzip» (direction system).

- Every physician can prescribe Psychotherapy by a legally approved Psychotherapist.
- This kind of Psychotherapy will be reimbursed by health insurance.
- The pay scale has to be determined.

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„Anordnungsprinzip“

All concerned could hand in their proposals to this new systems.

There had been a lot of quarrels between psychiatrists and psychotherapist, that have now fortunately been overcome.

All parties concerned agree now that this new system should replace the old one.

Now it depends on the «Bundesrat» (Federal Council) to decide, if they wish to proceed with this new system. If they agree, it will take probably some years until it can be put into action and the «Bundesrat» will be in charge. If they don't agree, the «Delegation» system will stay for many more years to come.

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Impact of the Corona Pandemia

The Corona Pandemia has shown once more that there are not enough psychotherapists and that they are needed very much especially in times of crisis.

Hopefully that helps to change the supply policy to open up and agree to the new »Anordnungsprinzip« which allows an easier access to Psychotherapy.

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