

Special needs and challenges in the medical rehabilitation of hearing impaired individuals

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Research aim/Background

Within the framework of the EUNAD IP project, the Centre of Psychotraumatology (CoP) of the Alexianer Krefeld GmbH did a mainly qualitative based study. The goal was to identify challenges, requirements and coping skills in rehabilitation treatments for hearing impaired individuals. Furthermore, it was the intention to develop procedural proposals for the psychosocial after-care as a consequence of different catastrophes which is orientated on the specific situation of hearing impaired individuals.

Methods

The study is based on 11 guide supported and structured interviews with hearing impaired individuals at the time of their medical rehabilitation at the CoP. The interviews were analyzed in orientation on the qualitative content analysis of Mayring. Additionally, there were included therapy and reflexion sessions with a interpreter and systemic consultant and the results of the psychometric questionnaires (PDEQ, TAXON, FLZ, SCL-90, PSSI, BDI, PTSS-10). The results were analyzed with SPSS.

Results

All 11 hearing impaired participants of the research sample grew up with hearing parents, nine of them had parents without the ability to speak sign language, two participants had parents with basic skills. All 11 participants reported about disturbed communication and a loss of information. The participants described that verbally messages had often not been understood within the family and reported about feelings of social exclusion and isolation. Seven participants reported about experiences of physical violence by others, eight participants reported about experiences of psychological violence and five participants reported about experiences of sexual violence. In the families of all participants there were experiences of violence mostly described as a result of the lack of communication possibilities. In rehabilitation nine participants showed difficulties in reacting in a sensitive manner, espe-

cially to take of the perspective of other individuals and reflecting their needs. These results lead to the thesis that problems in everyday communication with the above-mentioned consequences could be regarded as a risk factor for posttraumatic stress disorders. In the context of the treatment at the CoP it became clear that the diagnostical testing required an optimization because the psychometric questionnaires were despite interpreting only partly understandable for the hearing impaired participants. For example, it was unclear if dissociations occur among the participants because the descriptive concepts are not represented linguistically in sign language. All participants had difficulties answering the questions so that some parts of the questionnaires could not be evaluated. This was especially the case for the ‘Peritraumatic Dissociative Experiences Questionnaire’ (PDEQ) and the ‘TAX-ON’. For the purpose of usable and meaningful diagnostics, psychometric instruments should be culturally adapted for people with hearing impairment. In the context of the therapy sessions it became clear that stabilisation techniques with visual, haptic and motor methods and exercises were preferred. Attendance interpreters were also preferred in the meetings, while Verba Voice was viewed mostly critical. In the end, further professionalization of the treatment measures in these areas seems necessary to optimize the rehabilitation of hearing impaired people even more.