

Demand for the inclusion of culture-sensitive, mother-tongue psychotherapy in the catalogue of benefits provided by the welfare and healthcare systems

The statutory health insurance system must be obliged to finance interpretation by specially trained interpreters.

The "key points in improving and recognizing professional and vocational qualifications obtained abroad" in the field of psychotherapy are to be implemented promptly.

Argument

The Berufsverband Deutscher PsychologInnen (BDP, the Association of German Psychologists), the Berliner Initiative (Berlin Initiative) and other associations and experts demand a change to the German Social Security Code to ensure adequate provision of qualified psychotherapists to treat persons with a migration background in accordance with the Sonnenberger Leitlinien (Sonnenberg Guidelines) of 2002. Socially and economically disadvantaged persons with a migration background are particularly affected by this scarcity. The availability of suitable mother-tongue, culture- and gender-sensitive psychotherapy services is totally inadequate (see Berliner Erklärung [Berlin Declaration]: On the scarcity of psychological and psychotherapeutic services for persons with a migration background). Equally affected are female migrants who have experienced violence. As a rule, it is absolutely essential that they are treated in their mother tongue by female psychotherapists. Furthermore, there is scarcity of "safe" psychotherapeutic services for persons with a migration background living in Germany who are either undocumented or whose application for asylum is being processed. According to the Report from the European Commission of 26 November 2007 (26.11.2007. KOM (2007) 745), the situation in Germany violates EU law inasmuch as ALL host member states of the EU have an obligation to provide treatment for vulnerable persons with special needs: "vulnerable" persons are persons who have been subjected to "torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence" (2003/9/EG + Thüringer Erklärung [Thuringia Declaration]). Because of the scarcity of services, long waiting times (of two years and more) and cancellations are common.

Inadequate provision of psychotherapeutic services can result in illnesses becoming chronic. This not only puts a heavy strain on the sick person, but also on the entire family, in particular children, and causes costs for the healthcare system that could be avoided.

Concomitant with the scarcity of mother-tongue psychotherapeutic services in Germany there is a ready supply of psychotherapists from a wide range of countries of origin of persons with a migration background able to provide mother-tongue, culture- and gender-sensitive therapy. For a variety of reasons (e.g. high barriers for persons from

non-EU countries), it is virtually impossible for many of them to obtain recognition of their professional qualifications, which is a prerequisite for a licence to practise in Germany. Moreover, many psychotherapists with a migration background who do have a licence to practice have to wait years for permission from the Regional Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians to practise as independent therapists. Even if specifically qualified for mother-tongue psychotherapy, many still cannot obtain permission, ostensibly because of an oversupply. As a result, there is a huge need for mother-tongue psychotherapeutic treatment that urgently needs to be remedied. Concomitant with – and without in any way delaying – immediate measures to redress the situation, scientific studies should be launched to determine the need for culture- and gender-sensitive, mother-tongue psychotherapy on the one hand and the number, qualifications and countries of origin of psychotherapists living in Germany on the other.