

## CHAIR OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY & PSYCHOTHERAPY III

### *PROFILE*

Clinical psychology and psychotherapy are fields of study concerned with psychological and social stressors in families, couples, and individuals, as well as mental disorders and physical illnesses accompanied by psychosocial complaints. The role of psychotherapy is to support families, couples, and individuals in the prevention as well as the resolving of psychological and social problems, disorders, and illnesses. The aim is to stabilise and maintain family, partnership, and a personal balance in everyday life.

This field particularly includes aspects such as:

- Context sensitive understanding of health and illness
- Dialogical construction of Diagnoses
- Collective and individual clinical psychotherapeutic concepts of treatment
- The training and further education of therapists
- Supervision of Healthcare Institutions



Our partners of cooperation:



Heidehof  
Stiftung

The Department of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy III is led by Prof. Dr. Christina Hunger-Schoppe. Both in research and teaching the emphasis lies on practice-oriented and experimental research into sociopsychobiological processes. These processes are explored in psychotherapy with multiple people (e.g., families, couples), individuals and third professionals, and especially in systemic psychotherapy and cognitive behavioural therapy). Additionally, psychotherapeutic measures and diagnostic procedures (e.g., EXIS, BAS, SozNet) are developed and used in clinical research.

The Department offers courses in both degree programmes (B.Sc., M.Sc.).

### **Centre for Mental Health and Psychotherapy (ZPP)**

Closely linked to the Department is the Centre for Mental Health and Psychotherapy at Witten/Herdecke University. As part of an outpatient clinic, the centre offers psychotherapeutic support for families, couples and individuals with psychological and social burdens, mental disorders and physical illnesses accompanied by psychosocial complaints.

## CHAIR OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY & PSYCHOTHERAPY III

### *RESEARCH*

#### **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Systemic Therapy for Social Anxiety Disorders in Adults (SOPHO-CBT/ST)**

How effective are systemic and cognitive behavioural therapy for social anxiety disorders in adults?

Within our RCT, we researched the reduction of social anxiety as well as the improvement of systemic and psychological functionality. A further question was, how do important people of reference profit of an integration into the psychotherapeutic process? To follow up on this question, the psychosocial stress of significant others was also recorded.

#### **Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis on Systemic Therapy (SystRev-ST)**

How does systemic therapy work when considering different disorders, settings, and outcome variables?

With our project we want to create an overview of all current RCTs on systemic therapy, mainly considering aspects of adherence, manualisation, theoretical orientation, system-oriented outcome measurement and designs of studies. A special focus is laid on the development of an optimal search strategy for finding studies on systemic therapy.

The following questions guide our work:

- A) What can be learned from previous efficacy studies on systemic therapy?
- B) Which specific research methods are compatible with systemic therapy and the standards of evidence-based psychotherapy?
- C) How does systemic therapy work on both a symptom- and a system-oriented level?

#### **Efficacy of Family Constellation Seminars (FCS)**

How effective are family constellations as an individual intervention in a group setting for chronic psychosocial conflicts?

In our RCT with post-intervention in a representational setting, we investigate changes in psychological, interpersonal, systemic, and general levels of functioning. Moderators are the therapeutic relationship and specific patient characteristics. Measurement time points included the baseline data collection, two weeks, four, eight and twelve months, and five years after participation in a family constellation seminar. We are currently collecting the ten-year follow-up data.

## CHAIR OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY & PSYCHOTHERAPY III

### **Family Dynamics in Expatriates between Cultures (EXPAT-FAM)**

What challenges do families face when they move between different cultures and societies? This question is particularly relevant for the family dynamics of expatriates as people who work abroad for a longer period on behalf of their companies.

The connection between changes in work performance and the psychological and family stress experience of expatriates is linked in numerous theoretical models. However, there are hardly any empirical studies that examine the assumptions of these models. Our research is therefore on the empirical investigation of changes and adaptations in expatriate families. We are interested in influences on the work performance of expatriates, changes in family dynamics, the developmental phases of the children and the family, the psychological and social strains and the requirements needed for a successful integration of a cultural identity in the individual and family system.

### **Change in Multipersonsettings (CHAMPS)**

How does psychotherapy work when it involves all significant members of a social system (e.g. family, couple) in a way that is fitting to their needs?

We know that our social relationships have an immense impact on our socio-psychobiological well-being. Yet most psychotherapies in European and North American countries only involve the patient. It is known that psychotherapies in a multi-person setting contribute to a sustainable improvement of the psychological wellbeing, as well as the functionality in social systems. However, little is known about the specific mechanisms of action that causes these changes.

Our research has following aims: 1) create a systematic review to analyse and assess the current state of research on symptom- and system-relevant changes in multi-personal psychotherapies; 2) carry out semi-structured interviews with experts in multi-personal psychotherapy on indicators of system-relevant moments of change as well as on the role of the respective actors in the therapeutic process; 3) piloting a taxonomy of change indicators for multi-personal psychotherapies based on the SOPHO-CBT/ST.

### **Language in Psychotherapy (LiPT)**

How do we speak and what does that communicate about our state of health?

In our studies, we investigate the implicitly recorded language in psychotherapeutic processes. We use dictionary-based, automated methods of quantitative text analysis, especially the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC). The analyses include basic linguistic dimensions as indicators of self-related attention (e.g. personal pronouns), psychological processes such as cognitions (e.g. positive and negative feelings), social language (e.g. reference to others) and relativity (e.g. time perspectives).

## CHAIR OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY & PSYCHOTHERAPY III

### **Resources and Disorders in Social Networks (SocNet)**

How do structural and functional aspects of social networks affect health and illness?

Our research focuses on the adaptation of the Hierarchical Network Mapping Technique (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980) for psychological diagnostics. In particular, we are interested in resource-adapted relationships (support networks) as well as disorder-adapted relationships (e.g. anxiety, craving networks). In addition to the size of the social networks, their social composition, innovation, and sustainability as well as the frequency of contact with the network members are significant. Moderators and mediators include positive social support, social negativity, and system-related and psychological levels of functioning.

We have now developed an app, that can be used to diagnose the social network. This app facilitates evaluation, feedback and can be used in online research projects as well as in digital therapy and counselling services. It can also be requested and used as a scenic instrument for face-to-face work.

### **Interaction-focused music therapy with cancer affected children and their significant others: a randomized controlled feasibility study with subsequent intervention (INMUT)**

How can we accompany the lengthy treatment of children with cancer and their families?

The patients of paediatric oncology and their families are at the centre of an existential emergency for which music therapy has proven itself as a cross-linguistic field of action: in the creative act of making music, it offers the possibility of strengthening individual resources, abilities and makes socio-psychobiological conflicts audible and tangible in a very direct manner.

In cooperation with the Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine at the Herdecke Community Hospital and the Nordoff/Robbins Centre for Music Therapy Witten, we have developed a music therapy concept that specifically addresses family interaction in a multi-person setting.

In our feasibility RCT, we ask the following questions: A) In the context of music therapy, how are improvements of parent-child-interactions visible?, B) What is the impact of music therapy on various psychotherapeutic aspects: especially the achievement of goals, dealing with difficult situations, quality of life, psychosocial stress, psychosomatic complaints, and the system-related level of functioning?