

Becher explores therapy techniques to build practice

Over the summer, presentations through FSOS brought learning opportunities for students and staff about two types of therapy: Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (EFCT) and Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET). Graduate student Emily Becher took part in the training sessions for both types and found similarities, differences, and ways to broaden her future therapy practice.

The NET training was run by Dr. Frank Neuner, Dr. Claudia Catani, and Verena Ertl of the University of Bielefeld, Germany, and Dr. Liz Wieling of FSOS. NET focuses on helping patients who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Instead of focusing on highly traumatic events, patients are asked to lay out a timeline of their lives, a “lifeline,” marking good events with flowers and bad events with stones. Flowers and stones of different sizes are given to the patient to craft this timeline, with stronger memories being connected with larger flowers or stones.

“I believe in seeing people in the context of their whole lives,” said Becher. NET generates a document of what the patient has undergone in their life, not only being valuable to the patient and the clinician, but also as a human rights document and usable by Amnesty International.

Many participants have wanted to keep their testimonial document at the end of treatment; “Though it is hard to keep a paper document in a hut in a refugee camp, these people want to give it to their children as a way to pass along the story of what they went through,” said Dr. Catani.

The NET training gave examples of use for refugees from countries experiencing war, but with the rise of PTSD in the United States as veterans return from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the use at home was explored as well. Clinicians from the Veteran’s Affairs Medical Center also attended. Becher has ideas about how to incorporate NET with EFCT, the other training she attended in the summer.

A 28-hour “externship” training on EFCT was hosted from June 21-24 on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota, co-sponsored by FSOS and the Minnesota Renewal Center. The sessions focused on a review of the theory and practice of EFCT, application, demonstration, and practical exercises. The externship was open to individuals who either have completed or were enrolled in a counseling degree program.

PTSD affects not only the patient, but also impacts the patient’s relationships.



Graduate student Emily Becher

Although NET is an individual intervention technique, Becher spoke about ways to incorporate the “lifeline” strategy into couples or family settings.

Though Becher recommended these practices for clinicians with previous PTSD experience, she can see the value in learning about them for anyone. “I think both of these can be applicable in many other clinical settings,” she said. “Examining any life more closely is helpful in moving forward.”



NET Training 2010: Verena Ertl, University of Bielefeld, Dr. Liz Wieling, FSOS, Dr. Claudia Catani, University of Bielefeld, Dr. Frank Neuner, University of Bielefeld

Wieling to research war-affected families in Uganda

Associate Professor Liz Wieling will be in Uganda during the Fall 2010 semester, working with colleagues from the Universities of Bielefeld and Konstanz in Germany. She is conducting research working with children and families affected by the war, as well as clinical treatment of former child soldiers.

For more information on this project, please visit <http://www.vivo.org>