

Social Challenges – Shared Responsibility in Psychiatry and Psychotherapy

The 20th International World Congress of the World Association for Dynamic Psychiatry, co-sponsored by WPA, took place in Marrakech from 16 to 20 April 2024. Especially significant for the success of this congress, which generally aimed to integrate global social issues including the climate crisis, worldwide war conflicts and pandemics, was the great cooperation of the Moroccan Association of Dynamic Psychiatry under the direction of Dr. Hachem Tyal, and the German Association of Dynamic Psychiatry under the direction of Professor Dr. Maria Ammon.

Marrakech is the so-called Paris of the Sahara. It was built up since 1062 as a kingdom's place in front of the High Atlas-panorama. Actually it counts about 900.000 residents, most of them belong to the Berber tribe. The beautiful city with a lot of impressive sightseeing features telling the long history of Morocco, applies to be the cultural center of the country. Therefore, it offered the best backdrop for the congress which aimed to connect scientists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists from all over the world. This aim could be achieved: 350 international professionals from 25 countries were welcomed and over 140 speakers were featured in the scientifically high standing and dense program.

The motivation for this World Congress was to find out the backgrounds of the processes of conflict arousal, conflict dynamics and their solutions. First of all, it is necessary to understand their overall context in which conflicts become effective, dealing with fear of contact and interpersonal threats. Therefore, it is important to develop capacity for peace, solidarity and group cohesion.

The evening before the official opening of the congress was celebrated with a warm-up in the beautiful garden of Hotel El Andalous. Numerous congress participants – from well-known scientists to trainees – had the opportunity to get together and exchange ideas while joining delicious Moroccan food. The congress began in a convivial, high-energy atmosphere that continued with fruitful exchange over the following days of conference sessions.

As Dr. Tyal emphasized, the human sciences are eagerly awaited to help solving social challenges for the well-being of patients. Therefore, the con-

gress promoted interdisciplinary research and scientific exchange. In the words of Key lecturer Professor Nikolaj Neznanov, Honorary President of WADP, it means to take a holistic approach to dynamic psychiatry in order to understand mental health.

Professor Juan Mezzich from the International College for Person Centered Medicine was awarded the Gold Medal of the German Academy for Psychoanalysis for his outstanding commitment to the field of psychiatry.

Five fellowships were given to trainees psychologists and young career psychiatrists under 40 years old from Germany, Indonesia and India. Maria I. Zwißler (Germany) examined the impact of successive crises and wars on the psyche of trainees. D. Hirsch (Germany) worked about generational transmission of trauma.

There was an international meeting of young trainees.

The scientific program offered a broad overview and very diverse insights into research and clinical methods to accept the social challenges psychiatry and psychotherapy all over the world are confronted with.

Key Lectures (selection)

Professor Dr. Maria Ammon (Germany), in her key lecture, explored the meaningful importance of items such as constructive altruism, responsibility in the sense of an own meaningful position as an aspect of identity, and forgiveness as preconditions for reconciliation of peace capacity.

In the key lecture of Dipl. Psych. Gabriele von Bülow (Germany) the acknowledgement of suffering was described as another precondition for reconciliation. Patients may then forgive the persons and circumstances which caused their pain and develop a peaceful attitude.

Dipl. Psych. Astrid Thome (Germany) spoke about Not Felt Anxiety as a Complex Phenomenon: Which are circumstances in primary families causing this deficit? What are the consequences? How to deal this challenge in psychotherapy?

Another main focus of key lectures was Professor Dr. Ilse Burbiel's (Germany) presentation of the Dynamic Psychiatric Concept of Aggression.

Also must be mentioned Dipl. Psych. Margit Schmolke/Dipl. Psych. Nataly Hoffmann (both Germany): Their very interesting theme was: Psychotherapeutic Work between Insult and Connectedness, and their Reflections on a Challenging Interpersonal Event.

In his key lecture titled “Past, Present and Future of the Maghrebian Psychiatry” Professor Driss Moussaoui (Morocco) focused the cultural backgrounds of his country. Morocco finds itself in a lively change between tradition and modern world and this leads to immense and numerous challenges in psychiatry.

Dipl. Psych. Lea Dohm (Germany) drew attention to psychiatry and psychotherapy in times of ecological crisis.

Professor Joachim Bauer (Germany) spoke about the danger and the special impact of digitalization for losing contact with reality, the own person, analogue and valuable relationships as well as the consciousness of responsibility, while shifting to virtual worlds.

Professor Manfred Spitzer (Germany) examined bio-physiological aspects including new approaches in neuroscience and psychiatry. For example he represented a main study about the connection of loneliness and mortality.

Further key lecturers treated various themes such as “Psychoanalytic Insights on the aesthetics of living spaces and social responsibility” (Professor César A. Alfonso, USA), the influence of “Lacanian Psychoanalysis for the Psychiatry of our time” (Hervé Granier, France). Dr. Christiane Manderscheid (Germany) presented 45 years Mengerschwaike Hospital, a Dynamic Psychiatric Development Space for Patients and Team.

Professor Volker Tschuschke (Germany) works and published about the crisis of democracies which has to be defended. He highlighted the contribution of Psychodynamic Thinking for this discourse.

Symposia / Lectures (selection)

More than 50 lectures showed a wide overview of psychiatric and therapeutic themes confronted with new challenges of our time. A very important Symposium under the chair of Michel Botbol (France) treated the increasing violence of young people. It was opened up by a discussion of the World Psychiatry Association PIP (Psychoanalysis in Psychiatry) Section, followed by a lecture of Dusika Lecic and Bojana Pejuskovic (Serbia), who focuses school shooting as a huge collective trauma, and Professor Maria Ammon (Germany), who offered a transgenerational approach while pointing the connection of experience of trauma and personal development.

Others lectures introduced social concepts such as androgyny (Günter Ammon, presented by Cornelia Weiß, Germany) as a precondition for freedom and peace, as well as cultural aspects like psychoanalytic work with Syrian refugees (Houria Abdelhouahed, France). You could learn about art and psychotherapy as well as the importance of religion and spirituality in psychiatry, all lectures held by Moroccan colleagues.

Furthermore you could listen to lectures about proven and new psychotherapeutic interventions in the treatment of children and young adults. Petra Kiem, Germany, referred about her experience with group therapy as an experience of a secure basis in uncertain times, which was another main topic.

Referring to the holistic understanding of the “multidimensional human” (see Günter Ammon 1986) the congress offered several possibilities for creative group work in dance and yoga work shops and included also religion, philosophy and art (film presentation “Men Don’t Cry” by Vladimir Milosevic, Slovenia).

Embedded in all these activities a meeting of the World Federation of Psychotherapy took place. In conclusion: The 20th International World Congress of the World Association for Dynamic Psychiatry was a great success as an interesting, creative event with high leveled scientific approaches.

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