

## *The Italian network of empirical research in psychodynamic group therapy\**

**Maurizio Gasseau**<sup>§</sup>

**Summary.** *Empirical research in psychodynamic group therapy aims to investigate which conditions are efficacious in reaching positive results in group therapy: for this purpose researchers are involved in complex methodological assessment projects.*

**Key words:** psychodynamic, group, therapy, effectiveness, network

Empirical research in psychodynamic group therapy started late than in individual psychotherapy also because this kind of group has a higher complexity. In recent years at an international level and in Italy it began a fruitful discussion on research methods, an evaluation of the outcomes and of the process of dynamic psychotherapy group.

The Italian network of empirical research in psychodynamic group therapy meets annually to compare instruments of investigation, methods

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*<sup>§</sup>Valle d'Aosta University. E-mail: m.gasseau@univda.it*

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and research projects mainly on groups of analytical psychodrama and group analysis.

Numerous studies demonstrate the effectiveness and the meta analytic effectiveness of individual psychodynamic therapies in the short and long term, but still there are few studies of psychodynamic therapy group (Burlingame, Mackenzie, Strauss, 2004; Barlow, 2008).

The effort of the researchers in recent years has been directed to investigate the conditions of effectiveness of the groups, specifying which patients get positive results, the conditions under which they occur, in which time, which variable processes are more related to the outcomes and in which setting.

### **Research Project**

The research projects are developed in close collaboration between clinicians, involved in the actual experience of caring for patients and researchers interested in providing useful and scientifically sound tools for understanding the therapeutic work, and want to contribute to the empirical evaluation of the functioning of groups of psychodynamic therapy.

The objective of the several research projects is to assess the clinical efficacy (effectiveness) of psychodynamic groups, to increase the clinical relapse of empirical research on psychotherapy. It is also proposed a complex research project, which focuses on various aspects of therapeutic work (characteristics of patients before therapy, outcomes, process-outcome relationship, specific aspects of the therapeutic process believed to be capable of moderating the change) (Giannone, Lo Verso, 1998, Burlingame, MacKenzie, Strauss, 2004; Lo Coco, Giannone, Lo Verso, 2006).

The different aspects will be evaluated in a multi-dimensional way, involving the measurement of the change not as a single dimension, but as an intricate framework of operations, in relation to the outcomes (symptomatic, relational aspects, personological or psychological functioning of patients) and on the process (group cohesion, group climate, therapeutic alliance, therapeutic factors, the impact of the sessions, setting

changes, drop-out). The effectiveness of the therapy will be evaluated in a longitudinal perspective, in various group formats (verbal analytic groups of psychodrama) and there will be a comparison among groups.

These workshops implemented by the Italian network of empirical research in psychodynamic therapy group, which have already taken place at the University of Valle d'Aosta in 2011 and at the University of Padua in 2012 want to encourage awareness and a discussion on research done and on the one designed among clinicians of various organizations and associations and researchers from at least six departments of the Italian University Research.

## **Conclusion**

The initiatives of this network are particularly important. Group therapy is becoming increasingly important because of its proven effectiveness, the relational wealth that allows the reduction of costs, both for the user and for the lending institutions and the public office, all of which are even more relevant in the current social and economic crisis.

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