



Cross-Border Collaboration, Future for Young Professionals

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Abstract

Background: The international working visit of a Dutch delegation of 45 clinical psychologists (in training) and science-practitioners in September 2022 to their colleagues in Lisbon, Portugal as part of their post academic education program inspired young psychologists to realize a masterclass.

Purpose: Exchanging information on specific treatment between the Dutch psychologists and the colleagues from the Portuguese Psychiatric Hospital Júlio de Matos.

Method: A digital masterclass on EMDR treatment.

Results: A mutual ambition for a long-term cooperation over the borders and exchange of knowledge which provides more uniformity and positive solutions for future challenges.

Conclusion: Digital opportunities create positive implications for cooperation between countries which can lead to innovation and creative solutions.

Introduction

In September 2022, 45 Clinical Psychologists (in training) and scientist-practitioners paid a working-visit to colleagues in Lisbon, Portugal as part of their post academic education program. Public, private medical and psychiatric hospitals, public mental healthcare facilities, the university, start-ups and innovation centers were visited. During this working-visit, Prof. Dr. D. Neto, lecturer and researcher in ISPA (the first school of Psychology in Portugal, a private University, <https://www.ispa.pt/>) provided a global view of the presence of clinical psychologists and psychotherapists in health care contexts. He substantiated the need for the integration of an increasing number of professionals in hospitals and primary care. In Portugal some rural regions have very little support with respect to other regions. The differences in the organization of the healthcare system between the Netherlands and Portugal were explained. These (cultural) differences inspired the trainees. At the end of the working-visit there was clear agreement on future international cooperation and exchanges of knowledge [1]. Both the Portuguese and Dutch colleagues agreed that several topics require constant attention to promote the relevance of psychology in different domains such as (public) healthcare and scientific research. In addition, the importance of uniformity in education and training, examination and implementation of the profession of psychologists in a European context was supported.

Continuing the collaboration

To perpetuate the interconnection and new cooperation, collaboration between the Dutch and Portuguese Clinical Psychologists continued digitally in 2023 to prepare a live working-visit in the autumn of 2024 with a new group of Clinical Psychologists (in training).

A first part of the collaboration involved a masterclass on EMDR treatment on trauma in June 2023 which was organized together with the Psychiatric Hospital Júlio de Matos. The Portuguese colleagues N. Canudo and P. Diegues., both Clinical Psychologists, arranged a two-day conference on several topics (Jornadasdo Serviçode Psicologia Clínica: Um Serviço, várias especialidades (min-saude.pt), including trauma therapy. As part of this conference, a Dutch delegation organized an online lecture on EMDR offered by a Dutch expert, Clinical Psychologist Drs. R. van Diest.

According to Kaats and Opheij (2012), 5 impactful indicators are important for the effectiveness of cooperation, which they integrate into the so-called Lens Model: Ambition, Interests, Relationship, Process and Organization [2]. In the preparation of the masterclass, we used this model as a frame to optimize the results of the collaboration. A small workgroup was formed and a close contact with colleagues from Psychiatric Hospital Júlio de Matos was attained online, to discuss ambitions and organizational details of the masterclass and the precise content of the program involving EMDR practice in general. The process and the technical conditions

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were considered and ensured by a pre-conference meeting. Intercultural cooperation requires effort from both parties to get to know each other's habits and self-evidence, allowing mutual trust to grow.

EMDR therapy is being practiced in the Netherlands extensively, and is also rising within the Portuguese health care system. The main goal of this masterclass was to inform the Portuguese colleagues about the applicability and current scientific status of EMDR in the treatment of trauma and other psychiatric disorders. The Portuguese colleagues were expected to be enthused about the possibilities of EMDR and referred to the national professional association to become EMDR therapists.

The masterclass was well visited by approximately 70 Portuguese professionals; both live present in the Portuguese lecture-hall as well as online. The attendants appeared to be well engaged and multiple questions about the treatment technique were asked after the lecture. The digital form of the lecture did not seem to limit interactive communication and engagement. In return, the Portuguese colleagues inspired the Dutch delegation in the advisory function they built up on national level and in their experience with for example community based care [3].

In the autumn of 2023 more innovative events will take place. In collaboration with Hospital CUF Tejo, Lisbon city, an exchange of scientific research will take place during a conference. Further, the Ordem dos Psicólogos Lisboa will exchange experiences with the Dutch Institute of Psychologists (NIP). At the end of the year an event will be organized in collaboration with Manicómio art outsider studio with respect to Experiential Expertise. Both the Dutch and Portuguese delegation stimulate young professionals to join the events and prepare them to be the key figures that contribute to the fusion of psychologists and use the power of community on a global scale [4].

Young professionals and mental healthcare challenges over the world

The digital opportunities to discuss and exchange knowledge create positive implications for cooperation between countries, which can lead to innovation and creative solutions. Advantages of digital exchange include for example time efficiency, especially compared to live communication. The digital possibilities have grown extensively over the last several years. Especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, advanced technology supports the expansion of digital health entrepreneurship [5]. Maintaining digital collaboration also creates new opportunities and pathways for future work and helps to be flexible in rapidly changing environments [6]. Moreover, young professionals are more used to working with digital resources and may prefer this method of working over face-to-face communication. Also, and importantly, digital cooperation provides the benefit of sustainability.

Innovation and creative solutions that are expected to be created through these developments are urgently needed to address larger, global issues within mental health care. Mental health systems around the world are under pressure due to different factors such as aging and an increasing workload [7]. Young professionals have to deal with big global challenges on different levels, as well as maintaining their own mental health. Research shows that mental health professionals report more sick leave and frequent absences post-pandemic, which highlights the importance of the focus on their resilience [8]. This may be particularly challenging for them considering the current global

issues that may affect their work on direct or indirect level, including climate change, war, and staff shortages due to aging. International collaboration provides chances to unite on a larger level, to learn from each other, and to exchange evidence based, uniform knowledge. To conclude, it can be interesting to expand international cooperation on mental health.

Conclusion and clinical relevance

In order to expand the new cooperation between clinical psychologists (in training) in The Netherlands and Portugal, an online EMDR masterclass was provided by Dutch psychologists as part of a two-day conference at the Portuguese psychiatric hospital Júlio de Matos. The main goal of the masterclass seems to be achieved; colleagues have been enthused, relevant and evidence-based information about EMDR has been exchanged, and the cooperation has been continued to prepare for a new working-visit in 2024. These achievements would have been far less feasible without the use of current digital opportunities, in a time when international collaboration seems to be increasingly important given the rising global issues that affect mental health care.

By all means the collaboration between the Dutch and the Portuguese Clinical Psychologists will be continued in the future. There is a common hope for a long-term cooperation and exchange of knowledge which can be inspiring for intercontinental collaboration as well. As we stated before [1] and in accordance with our expectation, a lot of lessons in mental healthcare are to be learned abroad. It's work in progress.

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Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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