

# WHY WE NEED PSYCHOTHERAPISTS: REVISITING THE PHARMACOTHERAPY vs PSYCHOTHERAPY DEBATE

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# Important Notes

- The psycho vs. pharmaco debate is part of an ongoing research project.
- The main project examines the factors responsible for the success of Court Diversion Program (CDP)
- I will briefly introduce CDP and then proceed with the psycho vs pharmaco debate.
- In this study, 'psychotherapy' is used in general terms with no specific types.

# The Researcher's background

- Community Support Worker (Mental Health and Justice prog)
- Spiritual Care Provider for Immigrant Groups in Toronto
- Case Manager (S2H program in Toronto)
- Volunteer at the Toronto East Detention Centre
- Possesses BA, BSW, MA
- Current PhD candidate (Human Relationships)

# Introduction

- What is CDP?
- What are the goals of CDP?
- The Success of CDP (Frailing, 2010; Schneider, 2010)
- Factors responsible for the success of CDP (Brown, & Watanabe, 2010; Burns, Hiday, & Ray, 2013)
- Theories behind CDP
  - Medical model (Haegele & Hodge, 2016; Mitra, 2006)
  - Therapeutic Jurisprudence (Leroux, 2008; McGuire, 2000; Wexler, 2000)

# The Problem

- CDP aims to reduce recidivism by promoting MH of psychiatric patients (Schneider, 2010).
- Empirical research confirms the comparable efficacy of psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy for the treatment of depression and/or anxiety disorder (Bachar, 1998; Bibbo, 1999; Cuijpers, Sijbrandij, Koole, Anderson, Beekman, & Reynolds III, 2013; Quilty, Dozois, Lobo, Ravindran, & Bagby, 2014).
- Research has consistently proven the efficacy of psychotherapy for the treatment of Mental Illness (MI) including psychosis and Schizophrenia (Bachar, 1998; Garrett, 2016; Lambert, Bergin, & Garfield, 1994; Seligman, 1995; Warman & Beck, 2003)
- Psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists and psychotherapists play similar role in the treatment for MI (Seligman, 1995).
- Research findings, however, attribute the success of CDP to several factors excluding psychotherapy. (Burns et al., 2013; Gottfried, et al., 2014; Redlich et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2010)

# Research question

If psychotherapy is effective for the treatment of MI, and if CDP is exclusively for psychiatric patients, then why is psychotherapy not listed among the factors responsible for the success of CDP?

What's your guess?

# Some Assumptions

- CDP clients exhibit symptoms/diagnoses more severe than depression/anxiety
- Lack of funding for psycho
- Long wait time for psycho services
- Court support workers might not be aware of psycho services out there
- Doubt about the efficacy of psycho
- Greater time and commitment effort required in Psycho
- We don't know why

# A More Plausible Reason (Prosser et al., 2016)

- Psycho is not only at researchers' blind spot
- Psycho is also declining (Prosser et al., 2016)
- What is the reason for this?
- According to Prosser et al., (2016) there is a “a deeper ideological reason for the dramatic decline of psychotherapy.” p.309.
- The assumption that pharmaco is a ‘biological treatment’ and psycho is a ‘psychosocial treatment’.
- Pharmaco is believed to be scientifically valid treatment. (Prosser et al., 2016)

# A More Plausible Reason Con't

- This ideological belief supports the brain disease model of mental illness:
- MI is caused by pathological neural processes, therefore, therapies that directly target these neural processes are nec'ry, more scientifically valid
- But 'psychosocial treatments' such as psychotherapy do not.
- Viewing MI treatment from this ideological lens has serious clinical and policy implications for psycho.
- No wonder psycho is declining now

# Debunking the Myth

- Is pharmaco the only scientific valid treatment for MI?
- Prosser et al., (2016) argues that “the biological/psychosocial treatment divide between pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy is a myth because the target of both therapies is diseased neural functioning. Their difference lies only in their method for delivering therapeutic neurobiological changes.” p.310.
- Neuroimaging studies show that psychotherapy is also a biological treatment (Prosser et al., 2016)

# Psychotherapy vs Pharmacotherapy Debate:

## The argument by pharmaco

- Pharmaco is the medical treatment of diseases through the use and administration of drugs/medication (Bibbo 1999)
- Pharmaco is the primary treatment for most mental disorders (Prosser et al., 2016).
- The firings of neurons in the brain is the root cause of mental disorders.
- If MI is caused by biochemical imbalance of the brain then, it must be treated with chemicals (medication)
- CBT is ineffective for relapse prevention & symptom management for Bipolar & Schizophrenia (Lynch et al., 2010)

# Psychotherapy vs Pharmacotherapy Debate: The Case for Psychotherapy

“The practice of **psychotherapy** is the assessment and treatment of cognitive, emotional or behavioural disturbances by psychotherapeutic **means**, delivered through a therapeutic relationship based primarily on verbal or non-verbal communication.” (**Psychotherapy Act**, 2007, Section 3)

- Psycho referrals may come from psychiatrists
- Therapeutic alliance and empathy in sessions can make a big difference in patients' health
- One psychotherapy session per month is effective for maintenance and relapse prevention (Warman & Beck, 2003)
- Individual psychotherapy can be considered as a complementary method to pharmacotherapy (Ruzic et al. ,2010)
- Psycho is found to be effective for treating focused psychiatric disorders (Bachar, 1998)
- Psycho is less expensive; no side effects;

# Psychotherapy vs Pharmacotherapy: Summary approaches to the debate

- Pro-psychotherapists' response may be grouped into 3 categories:
  - 1) Psycho as an adjunct to pharmaco (Warman & Beck, 2003)
  - 2) Comparative theorists = Both are good treatment models for Depression & Anxiety. (Bibbo, 1999; Prosser et al., 2016; Quilty et al., 2014)
  - 3) Integrative Theorists = a combination of different therapeutic approaches for a holistic outcome (Ruziák et al., 2010)
- "combined therapy is superior to monotherapy" (Prosser et al., 2016:310)

**Which of the 3 appeals to you and why?**

# Theological framework for a Comprehensive Integrative Approach- (O'Connor & Meakes, 2014)

- Besides CPRO's definition, O'Connor & Meakes (2014) redefine Psycho as "the cure of the soul" p.29.
- Origins: Ancient Greek philosophers → Hebrew Script → Christian thought
- Humans have soul & body; both are connected and separated
- Soul is "the essence of human personality" "the total person, the self" p. 30.
- **Who does the cure of soul and how? God can use anyone, anything, anywhere**
- i.e. pastors, clinicians, social workers, physicians, psychotherapists etc.
- Where are the psychos today for the cure of troubled souls?
- O'Connor & Meakes wonder why many clinicians call themselves "secular therapists" p.33

**Given the reformulation of the debate, do you sense a need for psychotherapists?**

# Why We Need Psychotherapists

- To cure and care for the troubled souls
- For a robust integrative approach healthcare
- To minimize the overmedication phenomenon
- To deal with Complex issues faced by our society (crime rate, street violence, drug & mental health crises)
- To help achieve the goals of CDP with less reliance on the Medical Model
- To help pharmacotherapists thrive in their profession.

# Next step in the study

- Field work project
- Qualitative Case study approach
- Data collection
- Data Analysis
- Discussion
- Defense
- Publication

Questions, Comments or  
Suggestions?

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