

Oral presentation

Review of cost-effectiveness studies

Natassa Karapostoli*

Address: Open Psychotherapeutic Center, Athens, Greece

* Corresponding author

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Cost accounting has an active part in the allocation of scarce resources and in measuring the efficacy of the therapy services. Due to the fact that the cost of the provided "classical" psychiatric services (hospitalization, pharmaceutical therapy etc.) is too high, there is an increasing interest to other health care alternatives, i.e. community based psychiatric care. However, much of the "psychiatric reform" process throughout Europe, is not based on knowledge of the cost and effectiveness of various interventions. Until recently there was no evidence to support that communal or other day care mental health services are preferable to institutional ones. On the contrary, there was a wide spread belief that psychotherapy costs are very high. A review of the relevant literature shows that most of the authors agree that it is very difficult to assess the efficacy of psychotherapy and even more difficult to value it in monetary terms. This broad belief possibly explains to an extended degree the lack of research concerning the effectiveness of psychotherapy. The lack and the difficulties of these studies are due to various factors: apart from the practical problems of any research, there are two potential problems particularly into the psychiatric area: first, who and why is conducting a study, and second, if there are the appropriate tools and data in order to be conducted effectively. The present paper reviews and discusses researches conducted on the cost of mental health and especially psychotherapy. Through this review it becomes obvious that the clinical evaluation of a therapeutic approach is not enough any more. There is a need for the evaluation of the cost-effectiveness as well. The findings of several studies until now agree that community based care services and psychotherapy reduce the cost of mental health consumers. Even though there is a considerable number of studies, we didn't locate any data concerning the cost per hour of psychotherapy for the patient or the providing organization.