

Clinical psychology in the adult psychiatry in Denmark

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INTRODUCTION

Even though Denmark is a small nation, there is within its borders relatively great variation in the applied clinical psychology in the field of adult psychiatry. In the following some general main tendencies will be emphasised. Clinical psychologists in the field of adult psychiatry has 3 main functions: 1) psychotherapy, 2) psychological examination and 3) supervision. On top of that comes tuition (teaching), research, project development, and administration. These functions are all presently changing:

PSYCHOTHERAPY

Widely spoken the psychotherapeutic field embraces counselling, individually and in groups, with (and without) families, for longer or shorter periods of time, if necessary with consultative-, educative elements and social skills training. Three main directions dominate this area: the psychodynamic, the cognitive and an integrative, eclectic approach. In addition the systemic tradition has gained a footing primarily within the field of social psychiatry.

Up to the mid 90s, the psychodynamic direction was the leading theoretical basis for psychotherapy. However, a study showed that there was a need for promotion of more directive, supportive methods (Agerskov *et al.*, 1991). From the mid 90s the interest for the cognitive therapy methods expanded rapidly all over the country. A group of psychologists at the Psychiatric Hospital, The University Hospital in Aarhus, published several books and articles on the subject (e.g. Mørch *et al.*, 1995; Jørgensen & Rosenberg, 1998), and the interest in education and tuition in cognitive therapy rose, and still continue to do so.

In general, there is a tendency to softening of the dogmatic explained psychotherapy and a greater interest in evidence of effect. This results in a general expansion of the notion of psychotherapy, which then includes problem solving- and directive methods. This applies to both the clinical practice and to the, unfortunately sparse, research in psychotherapy in Denmark.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION

Originally, one generation ago, the main function of clinical psychologists in the psychiatric system was psychological testing of in-patients in connection with the diagnosing of these. When the psychological province expanded, the psychological testing became secondary. Within the last 10 years, however the testing has got a renaissance in the psychiatric field. Several new tests and revised tests have been published in Danish, and an expertise within the area, not least within forensic psychiatry, is growing.

SUPERVISION, RESEARCH AND TUITION

Supervision, particularly of other professionals and colleagues within the psychiatric system is the third dominating work field for clinical psychologists in the psychiatric system. Supervision is included as compulsory in the postgraduate course of clinical psychology, and supervision at a regular base seems to be a must for all professionals who have direct contact to patients.

Regarding research, the PhD degree, but also a generally rising interest for evidence, has resulted in psychologists increasingly being involved in research in areas such as schizophrenia, alcoholism, depression, eating disorders, and anxiety disorders.

The area of neuropsychology must here be emphasised. After some years of being less visible in the field of psychiatry, there is now a strong renewed interest for this adjacent area, both in connection with the exploration

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of depression and schizophrenia and also clinically in connection with the psychological examination of psychiatric patients.

Concerning education and tuition there is a large interest for psychological theories, psychotherapy and psychological intervention generally, and thus a great demand – especially for issues in the cognitive area.

The collaboration with university-degree programs is sporadic and none of the universities provide obvious qualification for a job in the psychiatric field.

ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

During the past 10 years the psychiatric field has undergone organisational changes, which are of great importance for the field of psychology: firstly, a development in the general psychiatry with the closing down of beds and geographically decentralised local- and regional psychiatric centres, combined with a narrowing of the group of psychiatric patients; secondly, a specialisation within several areas: forensic psychiatry, eating disorders, foreign languages, anxiety, newly diagnosed schizophrenia and others. Both tendencies result in psychologists yet more often working in smaller interdisciplinary teams. In these teams, an ideology often prevails that all professionals with no regard to educational background work in the same way. In particular the casemanagement-phenomena, which has also afflicted the field of Danish psychiatry, is included in this tendency. Despite the good cause (in particularly in the area of early treatment of schizophrenia), it implies several dangers: de-professionalisation, looser defined demarcations between professions, and deprivation of the academic approach. Development of the area by theo-

retically sound and clinically anchored renovations seems to become inhibited mainly in the general psychiatry.

Decentralisation and team association at the expense of mono-professional units contains this danger in itself. The casemanagement idea is only the extreme variant. The above mentioned tendencies together with a great demand cause more psychologists than ever to leave the psychiatric field and establish themselves as private practitioners.

The Danish Psychological Association has quite surely used the 90s' high employment to determine requirements to the psychological postgraduate courses, but has not had the power to get the degree worked into the hospital-system in correspondence to the medical doctors.

SUMMARY

During the 90s' a softening of the dogmas, new orientation and expansion of the psychotherapeutic field have been developed. Decentralisation and specialisation involves interdisciplinary team association that threatens the academic advantages of mono-professional fora. However expanded research especially related to specialisation is seen.

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