

Toronto Group, International Neuro-Psychoanalysis Society

What do psychoanalysts, neurologists, neuroscientists, or psychiatrists mean when they use a term such as repression? Presenter Dr. Philip Gerretsen became curious enough about his experiences as a social worker to pursue a career as a psychiatrist/clinical researcher. He shared with us his group's research with people with schizophrenia, who "lack insight" or awareness into their illness (anosognosia). There is wide variation in their ability to distinguish between externally generated perceptions and internally generated experiences. In this respect, they share something in common with patients with right-hemisphere stroke, confabulation syndromes, some dementias, conversion disorders, etc. But the specific clinical characteristics may vary in crucial ways, which only careful assessment in a fluid, flexible interacting course of treatment can reveal.

Dr. Gerretsen and colleagues conducted a volumetric study of the brains of 64 patients diagnosed with schizophrenia (of whom 9 were untreated), whose degree of lack of insight appeared to be independent of other measures of illness severity and antipsychotic medication. Their findings indicated lower grey-matter volumes in several regions: right orbitofrontal cortex (thought to suppress assignment of abnormal salience via suppression of dopamine release in ventral striatum), precuneus (seen as involved in self-apprehension), and cerebellum (involved in modulation of cognitive and emotional processes), as well as decreased white-matter volume (suggesting decreased interhemispheric traffic, perhaps resulting in the more defensive functions of the left hemisphere dominating a dysfunctional right hemisphere).

In the discussion, we addressed the descriptive similarity of the symptoms of a number of syndromes but noted the qualitative differences of affect, content of the subjects' own accounts for their difficulties, and the distinguishing features of the "repression(s)" encountered in the psychoanalytic setting. Preferably, there will be an analyst in every scanning room who can more precisely interpret clinical phenomena than the current standard of checklist items.

Dr. James Deutsch met with a group of psychiatric residents interested in the neuroscience underlying psychotherapy. The early history is often sketchy with adult patients, but, when viewed from the perspective of clinical work with children, it is indispensable. A number of treatment cases, including an adult analytic patient who subsequently sustained a right parietal head injury, were used to illustrate the intricacies of the analytic approach to patients with or without neurological issues. We noted the temptation to concretize disorders and symptoms that turn out to be quite changeable in function and meaning over time. At times, however, thinking about underlying substrates can be helpful as one, albeit important, perspective.

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Istanbul Neuropsychoanalysis Study Group

Istanbul, being the cultural capital of Europe in 2010 (www.istanbul2010.org), continues with its integrative role in

interdisciplinary studies of neuroscience, psychiatry, psychology, and psychoanalysis. We are happy to carry out this role in both national and international organizations in Istanbul. Here is some news from our city:

1. On 8–11 March 2010, Dr. Rise VanFleet, the director of the Family Enhancement and Play Therapy Center, Pennsylvania, and Filiz Çetin, who works as a psychological counselor and play therapist at Nisan Psychotherapy Center, Istanbul, gave an "Intensive Filial Therapy Training" in Dublin. There were 13 participants attending from England, India, and Ireland. Besides the filial therapy approach, the universal value of play across all cultures and the effect of parent-child play on creating attachment via right-hemisphere interactions were also discussed during the whole training.
2. On 31 May 2010, Prof. Mark Solms—the founder and co-chair of the International Neuropsychoanalysis Society—was welcomed to Istanbul to give a conference on "Dreams: A Neuropsychoanalytic Perspective." Fatma Gökçe Özkarar, Gülbin Tüter, and Serap Altekin from the Doku Psychotherapy Center (www.dokudanismanlik.com) organized the conference at the Istanbul branch of the Turkish Psychological Association. Those who attended were mostly clinical practitioners interested in learning about mechanisms of dreams and neuropsychoanalysis. Prof. Solms focused on the evidence that has recently accumulated against the equating of dreaming and REM sleep, and evidence that has accumulated in favor of a central role for motivational brain mechanisms in dreaming. We are looking forward to welcome Prof. Solms again and to organizing further Istanbul neuropsychoanalysis conferences—including other guests as well—in the future.
3. In June 2011, the 7th International Congress of Cognitive Psychotherapy will be held in Istanbul, hosted by the Turkish Association for Cognitive and Behavioral Psychotherapy (www.iccp2011.com). The workshops are highly recommended for those interested in building up a common language between psychodynamic and cognitive psychotherapies.
4. In July 2011, the 12th European Congress of Psychology will be held in Istanbul under the aegis of the Turkish Psychological Association (www.ecp2011.org). Participants may register for the congress by email (ecp2011@topkon.com). The Istanbul Neuropsychoanalysis Study Group plans to open a stand related to neuropsychoanalysis at the congress avenue and also to present their study on Turkish standardization of the Affective Neuroscience Personality Scale at the congress.

The Istanbul Neuropsychoanalysis Study Group will continue to update you with the news from our city—connecting all directions, and managing diversities.

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