

Title of presentation: Countertransference in relation to client interpersonal functioning: a qualitative study.

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Abstract (poster presentation): Psychotherapists frequently experience strong thoughts and feelings in working with clients. This is traditionally referred to as countertransference. Countertransference phenomena are omnipresent in everyday ambulant and institutional psychotherapeutic practice. Although different therapeutic movements have distinct views on how to handle this matter, they more or less agree to the idea that the nature of countertransference reveals something about client dynamics. Over the past decade, there has been growing interest within the field of empirical research in the relationship between countertransference and client characteristics. However, this research is mainly quantitative in nature, which allows generalizations across groups but leaves conclusions largely superficial. Moreover, it bases client characteristics exclusively on descriptive diagnostics of psychopathology, leaving them isolated and static, instead of viewing them dynamically in their interpersonal context. To truly understand the development and evolution of countertransference in relation to client characteristics throughout treatment, this phenomenon will be studied within a qualitative, multi-case research design. Client characteristics will be approached from a psychodynamic structural viewpoint, placing them in a complex reciprocal relationship with the therapist. An overview of the used methodology will be presented, as well as some initial findings.

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