Integrative Reactivation and Rehabilitation to Reduce Multiple Psychiatric Symptoms of Psychogeriatric Patients and Caregiver Burden

In this dissertation the development and testing of a psychotherapeutic nursing home programme (IRR) to reduce multiple psychiatric symptoms of psychogeriatric patients who suffer from cognitive impairment or dementia and caregiver burden is evaluated. In general, from the perspective of the caregiver the surplus effects of IRR were significant of a moderate to large size. After six months follow-up the effects on the psychogeriatric patients were stable and on the caregiver even enlarged. From the perspective of the nursing team, the results were insignificant, though pointed to the same direction and were significantly and increasingly correlated over time. The extra costs of IRR were acceptable and the numbers needed to treat were low (four to five) compared to donepezil (≈10) and to memantine (≈3-8). Moreover, the favourable effects were not modified by type of dementia or level of cognitive functioning. However, because of the methodological issues the results have to be interpreted cautiously. According the GRADE approach the strength of the recommendations can be evaluated as moderately strong. The findings presented in this dissertation may inspire to further scientific research to reduce multiple psychiatric symptoms of psychogeriatric patients who suffer from cognitive impairment or dementia, and burden of the caregivers. In order to relieve the suffering of psychogeriatric patients and their caregivers, professionals, researchers, managers and policy makers have to address the implementation barriers for psychotherapeutic treatment inside and outside nursing homes e.g. integrative psychotherapeutic training programmes, quality of life research, person-oriented and content-oriented management and modification of the ZZP-classification system.

As 80% of psychogeriatric patients suffer from multiple psychiatric symptoms and 70-80% of caregivers are moderately to heavily overburdened, the implementation of integrative psychotherapeutic treatment based on a problem-solving theoretical framework as well as a person-oriented approach is urgent. Future studies have to be performed to strengthen the evidence, preferably as blinded RCTs with a long follow-up period.