

## Statement on the Cost Coverage of remote-delivered Outpatient Psychotherapy Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

23.11.2020

The **Committee for Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy (PSYCLIN)**, who represents the position of the psychological science in Switzerland, welcomes the decision made on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020, with respect to the cost coverage of remote services delivered during the pandemic. At the same time, the Committee made further proposals in this direction. First, it welcomes the recent decision in favor of remote therapy options, which – in line with point 3.2. – also refers to delegated psychotherapy. However, the limitation of the length of delegated psychotherapy sessions to 360 minutes per 3 months is regarded as not expedient since this limitation results in merely 7.2 sessions per psychotherapist considering that the regular length of a psychotherapy session is 50 minutes.

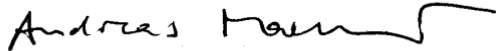
In agreement with the respective task force of the relevant professional associations, the **Committee for Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy (PSYCLIN)** would like to urgently propose an amendment, which equates the number and length of delegated psychotherapy sessions to those delivered by specialists in psychiatry and psychotherapy. At this stage of the Covid-19 pandemic this is necessary for many psychotherapy patients, who are in quarantine, tested positive for Covid-19 but are asymptomatic and still would like to continue their psychotherapy sessions, and whereelse it is indicated. The recognition of online therapy moves in the direction of the guidelines of the Federal Council to limit the contact between individuals as much as possible.

With this statement, we would yet like to generally address all forms of remote psychotherapies, the so-called online or e-health psychotherapies. The **effectiveness, practicality, and efficiency (EPE)** of these interventions – as in the following called online therapies – has in principle been proven in the international and national scientific frame. There are generally two types: “attended” (namely held) by a psychotherapist or “unattended”. Scientifically, Switzerland operates at the forefront of the international psychotherapy research in the development of both types of this therapy. This is clearly reflected in the published studies of the internationally renowned working groups of the Universities of Bern and Zurich Psychology Departments (Berger et al., 2017, Maercker et al., 2015), who are listed at foremost positions of international top journals in psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy (Andersson et al., 2019, Carlbring et al., 2018) with their meta-analyses regarding their effectiveness. Indications for the scientifically EPE-proven online therapies are, e.g. depressive disorders, different anxiety disorders (in particular the generalized anxiety disorder, which expresses itself in constant rumination about potential threats), sleep disorders (insomnia), eating disorders and somatic stress and pain disorders.

In many economically developed countries in the World online therapies have been internationally accepted to be compensated for by health insurances during this recent pandemic. In addition to the frontrunners for legally approved, compensated online therapies during the pandemic like the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Great Britain and Australia, also countries like Germany have now moved to recognizing online therapies in addition to telephonic therapies as a health insurance service. Therewith, specific needs for particular indications can be addressed, especially in the context of the pandemic.

It shall also be noted that – in the frame of some evidence-based low-threshold psychotherapy services offered by different psychology and psychotherapy university institutions in Switzerland – several free online self-help services have been initiated during the pandemic. This relates for example to the psychological crisis response and psychological couple therapy programs.

On the basis of the scientific evidence base and the current pandemic requirements, we kindly ask the Federal Office of Public Health of the Swiss Confederation to request the health insurance unions and the Commission for Medical Tariffs UVG (CTM) to perform a short-term (pandemic-related) on one hand but also a long-term strategy development and assessment, in order to participate in the scientific progress in this important area for mental health.



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Verteiler: Krankenversicherungsverbände (curafutura, santéswiss), UVG (MTK)

#### Zitierte Publikationen:

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