

**Course ID: CMEC22**

## **Interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) of depression**

**Course director:** Torsten Gruettert

### **Educational Objectives:**

1. Good medical practice in psychotherapy of depression
2. Interpersonal approach within treatment of depression
3. Dual aims of IPT: symptom remission and interpersonal problem solving (attributed to current depression)
4. Focussed short-term psychotherapeutic work in a here-and-now framework

**Course description:** Among the variety of short-term psychotherapies established for the treatment of depression, IPT (16-20 sessions) by Klerman, Weissman et al. (1984) is meanwhile one of the most well known and clinically introduced approaches. IPT has explicitly been controlled in a variety of studies proving efficacy. The interpersonal school (Sullivan) of psychiatry represents IPT's theoretical background hypothesising that psychiatric illnesses and here depression develop in an interpersonal context: interpersonal problems may contribute to onset and potentially chronicity of (current) depression or/and depressive symptoms may interfere with interpersonal well being.

Based on empirical studies on e. g. life events, social support, stress and depression the authors defined four problem areas:

1. retarded grief,
2. interpersonal conflict,
3. interpersonal role conflict/role transition and
4. interpersonal deficits/isolation.

The therapy is divided into three parts: Within the introduction period (3–4 sessions) the patient's current depression will be attributed to mostly one designated problem area on which will be focused within the main therapy section. IPT works in a here-and-now framework and connects state and change of depressive symptoms with state and change of interpersonal functioning and well being through therapeutic work. The dual aim of IPT is

- symptom remission and
  - solving of attributed interpersonal problem
- by promoting patients' interpersonal skills in and out of sessions.

Open and focussed exploration, psycho education (patient expert of his/her illness), the transportation of the sick role (Parsons), assessment of the interpersonal inventory/interpersonal resources, goal attainment scaling, the definition of patient and therapist role in therapy, the explanation of the IPT concept, the agreement on the problem area and a therapy contract are integral parts of the introductory sessions in IPT and represent good psychotherapeutic practice for therapists engaged in treatment of clinical depression.

In main (3/4–14 sessions) period the patient and therapist work on the agreed focus. The IPT manual describes goals and treatment strategies for each problem area. Clarification, self disclosure, communication analysis, option seeking etc. are main techniques in IPT.

During termination period the patient resumes what was learned, what still is left, clarify motivation for booster sessions (maintenance), and learn about prophylactics and crisis management.

This teaching course will transport the basics of IPT so that course members will e.g. be able to start practising Interpersonal Psychotherapy under supervision. The following aspects will explicitly be focused on:

1. time frame,
2. medical model,
3. dual aims of solving interpersonal problems and symptom remission,
4. interpersonal focus on the patient's affective engagement solving current life problems contributing to current depression,
5. specific and general psychotherapeutic techniques and
6. empirical support of IPT.

Short role playing with will be emphasised within the course to train IPT techniques. A handout will be available.

**Educational methods and course material:**

1. A handout will be available
2. Reference list will be included into handout
3. Frequent role play expects active participation of participants
4. Presentation via power point
5. Videos to exemplify strategies will be shown
6. Active psychotherapist initiating self disclosure of patient
7. Clarification, solve interpersonal problems, activation of resources, actualisation of problem

**Target audience:** Psychotherapists and Psychiatrist interested in short-term and focused psychotherapy of depression with an interpersonal approach.

**Course level:** Previous diagonal reading of Klerman G, Weissman MM et al. (1984) Interpersonal Psychotherapy of depression may be helpful but is not required.