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## **Proceedings**

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## **Paola on the couch: an empirically supported psychoanalytic psychotherapy of a trans woman**

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### **Abstract**

*Introduction:* Psychoanalytic accounts of gender variant patients in the recent literature are fairly rare. Psychoanalysis with these patients suffers from old biases which determined short-sighted and pathologizing interpretations of gender diversity. This contribution provides an account of a long-term psychoanalytic psychotherapy, based on an open and affirmative approach towards gender reassignment, of a trans adult woman during the crucial years prior to the decision for gender reassignment surgery (GRS).

*Method:* Empirical measures include the Shedler-Westen Assessment Procedure-200 (Westen & Shedler, 1999a, 1999b) and the Countertransference Questionnaire (CTQ; Betan, Heim, Zittel Conklin, & Westen, 2005) and the Psychotherapy Relationship Questionnaire (PRQ; Westen, 2000).

*Results:* The study illustrates the progress in Paola's psychological functioning and in the therapeutic relationship through the clinical description of various phases of a long-term therapy (referral, one year after, and follow-up ten years after) and the findings on the measures collected at each stage.

*Conclusions:* The results show the benefits and the complexities of the psychoanalytic treatment with gender variant patients, supporting them in key aspects of their transition.

## **The co-occurrence between gender dysphoria and autism in trans youth: a critical commentary through a single case study**

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### **Abstract**

*Introduction:* In recent years, a higher incidence of traits that seem to be related to Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) in individuals with Gender Dysphoria (GD) and of gender variant traits in autistic users, compared to the general population have been highlighted. Therefore, several studies investigated the possible co-occurrence between these two conditions and the consequences in terms of assessment and treatment.

*Methods:* A literature review were conducted to investigate the co-occurrence of GD and ASC. Then, through a single case this co-occurrence is investigated in deep. Autistic traits and gender variant behaviors are evaluated and described at the beginning of the treatment, after a year, and at the end of the treatment.

*Results:* From the literature review different criticisms can be made: the diagnoses of both conditions are often not accurate, the tools used to evaluate autistic traits and gender dysphoria often are not appropriate and methodological criticalities are found on the studies that investigate the co-occurrence. Relying on the account of a trans adolescent followed in a psychoanalytic psychotherapy, more critical aspects are pointed out. Autistic traits can be better understood as massive defences related to high discomfort of the GD, like social and relational problems, complex perception of the body and difficult behavioral patterns.

*Conclusion:* This study underlines the need to deepen this co-occurrence, to avoid incurring in incorrect and hasty diagnoses and to focus on some aspects of GD and ASC that need attention and knowledge, in order to better define the guidelines for a correct assessment and treatment. The medicalization and a tendency to pathologize these conditions have led to a simplistic overlap while a more complex view and investigation are needed.

## **Trans-sexuality: a taboo topic?**

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### **Abstract**

Since medical interventions for transgender individuals were made available, guidelines were proposed to identify candidates who could benefit the most from such interventions. These guidelines set the stage for a “pathologization” of the sexual life of transgender people in the eyes of mental health professionals. The fear of being excluded from medical treatments may still play a role for trans clients, and they might show a guarded attitude whenever questions around their sexual life are raised in consultation.

For gender-variant individuals, receiving validation of their own gender identity from a partner who accepts and shows interest in them is an experience of paramount importance, which may act as a protective factor for their psychological as well as sexual well-being. The aim of the consultation with the trans and gender-variant client should, therefore, be enhancing such experiences and helping the client to remove the hurdles that hinder sexual satisfaction and well-being.

treatment have more efficacy than others; among them, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Mentalization Based Therapy (MBT) and Transference Focused Psychotherapy (TFP) share common elements - manualization, attention to treatment relationship, clear framework, attention to affect - and beneficial effects, as reported in different recent articles. In the panel, these three forms of intervention are presented and discussed.



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