

## EMDR Training for Mental Health Therapists in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina for Increasing their Psychotherapy Capacities

Dear Editor,

After war 1992-1995 in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), whole population was highly psych-traumatized. During 1992-1995 many of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BH) citizens witnessed or experienced a myriad of traumatic events (1-3). Experiences of war traumas create a chronic sense of decreased safety that may lead to altered health behaviors, long-term effects on emotional and physical health, and increased use of health care services (4). During the war, the civilians in BH experienced many traumatic situations similar to those experienced by combat soldiers such as extreme threats and intense feeling of helplessness (2). Mental health therapists had no enough capacities to meet needs of population. They are permanently in need to increase their psychotherapy capacities (5).

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a psychotherapeutic treatment which incorporates eye movements to provide bi-lateral stimulation to the brain. In 1987, Dr Francine Shapiro, an American Psychologist, made the chance observation that eye movements significantly reduce the intensity of disturbing thoughts and feelings. EMDR has developed rapidly since then and is now used by therapists all over the world. Research studies have show that it can markedly accelerate the healing process.

EMDR was initially developed to be used with sufferers of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) following traumatic events in their lives. In March 2005 it was validated by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence in the UK (NICE) as a treatment of choice for PTSD (see [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)) (6).

Humanitarian Assistance Programmes of United Kingdom and Ireland (HAP UK & Ireland) is a charity affiliated to, though independent from, the EMDR UK & Ireland Association. It was set up to provide training in traumatology and EMDR to local mental health professionals working with people in traumatised communities worldwide.

HAP UK & Ireland think that the best help in Bosnia-Herzegovina by adding to the expertise of their mental health professionals through training them in EMDR. This is a long-term project which aims to make them self-supporting in eventually being able to provide training with the country and found their own EMDR organisation. Apart from providing training, this means providing on-going supervision and support on a regular basis.

EMDR training in Bosnia and Herzegovina took place at the Department of Psychiatry, University Clinical Centre Tuzla. It started in December 2009, with Michael Patterson and Bridget O'Rawe from Northern Ireland who provided Level 1 EMDR training for 24 trainees:

neuropsychiatrists, residents of neuropsychiatry and psychologists from eight different health institutions from six different cities in BH.

EMDR training has continued in May and November 2010 year with Sian Morgan and John Henry.

The full training was completed in 16-19 May 2011. Michael Patterson and Keith Piper provided Level 2 EMDR training for 19 trainees who completed theoretical part of EMDR training, so they accomplished the condition for the process of supervision for acquiring accreditations for European accredited EMDR psychotherapists.

The project will then be extended throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina and hopefully in the future to other areas of the Balkans.

HAP UK & Ireland is pleased that EMDR has been greeted so enthusiastically in Bosnia and we look forward to working closely with our colleagues there and forging and strengthening these links.

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