Existential behavioural therapy for informal caregivers of palliative patients: a randomised controlled trial

Presenter: Monika Brandstaetter

Authors: M.J. Fegg¹, M. Brandstätter¹*, M. Kögler¹, G. Hauke², P. Rechenberg-Winter², V. Fensterer³, H. Küchenhoff³, M. Hentrich⁴, C. Belka⁵, G.D. Borasio⁶

Abstract:
Existential behavioural therapy (EBT) was developed as a manualized group psychotherapy comprising six sessions to support informal caregivers of palliative patients in the last stage of life and during bereavement. We tested the effectiveness of EBT on mental stress and quality of life (QOL) in a randomized controlled trial design including 160 caregivers. Primary outcomes (somatization, anxiety, depression, life satisfaction and QOL) were assessed at baseline, pre-, post-treatment and follow-ups after 3 and 12 months and subjected to a multivariate analysis of covariance. Secondary outcomes included mindfulness, meaning in life, benefit finding, resilience, and affect.
Participants were 54.5+/-13.2 years old, 69.9% were female. Treatment effects included medium to large effects on anxiety and QOL post treatment and medium effects on depression and QOL at the 12 months’ follow-up. EBT seems to be an effective intervention for informal caregivers of palliative patients. Further evidence is needed to confirm these findings.
Session learning objectives

The presentation will provide:

- An overview of burdens and morbidity rates of informal caregivers

- Description of the Existential Behavioural Therapy approach for supporting family caregivers in palliative care

- Outline of evaluation design

- Presentation of key findings of intervention study (randomized controlled trial)

- Discussion of lessons learned and clinical implications

- Discussion of barriers to support utilization