Absurd Emphasis on Effectiveness and Immediate Results Will Harm Medical Treatment

T.	Töres	Theorell
----	-------	----------

National Institute of Psychosocial Factors and Health and the division for Psychosocial Factors and Health, Department of Public Health Sciences, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden

Töres Theorell, MD, PhD, National Institute of Psychosocial Factors and Health and the division for Psychosocial Factors and Health, Department of Public Health Sciences, Karolinska Institute, S-17177 Stockholm (Sweden)

In cardiac rehabilitation it has been an established fact for a long time [4] that the psychosocial part of it needs a long time in order to become lastingly effective. Brief therapies mostly have a limited effect. It is well structured programs that last for several months that have profound durable effects. It is likely that this is true for all long-lasting health problems.

In a recently published review, Fava [5] has pointed out that the concept of recovery in affective disorders is complex. Controlled evaluation of a short pharmacological treatment may provide too simplistic an answer to the question whether the treatment is effective or not. There may be improvement after short therapy but relapses and improvements during a very long time thereafter. A short

evaluation period may accordingly provide an erroneous answer.

In psychosocially oriented therapies there is often a need to find out exactly how to institute the intervention or treatment in practice. Accordingly it could be very unsatisfactory to start the evaluation in an early stage before the therapy group has obtained the practical know-how. There is an obvious risk that good therapeutic principles could be rejected due to such 'hasty' evaluations.

That we have to accept that our treatments have to take time does not mean that we shall accept ineffective treatments. But we need to get the message through to the administrators that brief may not always be equal to effective.

References

- Strom P: How are the elderly and the staff affected by privatization of home care for elderly? On the need for critical research on entrepreneurs in the care of elderly; in Gustafs-son RA (ed). Buy and swallow, please swallow (in Swedish). Stockholm, Swedish Work Environment Fund, 1994.
- Theorell T, Konarski K, Westerlund H, Burell A-M, Engström R, Lagercrantz A-M, Teszary J, Thulin K: Treatment of longstanding psychosomatic disorder by means of art psychotherapy -a process description. *Psychother Psychosom* (in press).
- Shalev AY, Bonne O, Eth S: Treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. *Psychosom Med* 1996;58:165-182.
- Theorell T: Psychosocial intervention as part of the rehabilitation after a myocardial infarction. *Int Rehabil Med* 1983;5:185-188.
- Fava TA: The concept of recovery in affective disorders. *Psychother Psychosom* 1996;65:2-13.

Theorell2. 228