This Week's Citation Classic

The article reviewed the patient, therapist, and treatment factors influencing the out-comes of psychotherapy in 166 studies, and then offered a plan for a systematic multivariate crossvalidation study of the most promising factors. The review identified among the main factors psychological health-sickness of the patient and similarities of patient and therapist. [The *Science Citation Index®* (*SCI®*) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI®)* indicate that this paper has been cited in over 250 publications since 1971.]

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"The review was done by the Penn Psychotherapy Project which is still engaged in the same research although with new members added: Jim Mintz (UCLA); Marjorie Cohen (Penn); Paul Crits-Christoph (Yale); Leslie Alexander (Bryn Mawr); A. Thomas McLellan, George E. Woody, and Charles P. O'Brien (Penn and Philadelphia VA Medical Center); Marilyn Johnson (Rush University); Thomas Todd (Harlem Valley Psychiatric Center); and Stanley Greenspan and William Polk (NIMH). The review was a preliminary to a proposal for a crossvalidation. NIMH obliged by awarding a five-year grant (1968-1973). Ever since, we have been analyzing the data on 73 patients in moderate length, psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy.

"Part of the review's popularity was its position as the first comprehensive review of the topic. Those who investigate the topic of the kinds of patients who benefit from psychotherapy —an increasing number of investigators—therefore begin by citing our first review. An updated version of it is in our forthcoming book (below).

"The results of the crossvalidation are now being assembled in a book, *Psychotherapy: Who Benefits and How?* which is in two parts: part one, what can be predicted based on the patient and therapist before treatment; part two, what can be predicted based on the treatment. Part one shows that most patients benefited from psychotherapy, but in terms of predicting the benefits, only a few patient variables were significant, and these were at a modest level. The Prognostic Index Interview[1] variables did best; e.g., emotional freedom composite predicted .30 (p< .05) and a crossvalidation on 30 patients yielded .39 (p<05). Psychological health-sickness was a pretreatment predictor at the same level. We are proceeding with investigations of psychological health-sickness; e.g., the 'Six programs for substance abuse study' (McLellan et a/., in preparation) showed the level of prediction was even better for psychological severity than for drug severity. Neither the therapist measures nor most of the treatment measures predicted significantly.

"In part two of the book considerable attention is devoted to the 'helping alliance.' It is defined as the patient's experience of the treatment or the therapist as providing or being able to provide the needed benefits to fulfill the patient's goals in treatment. We found that measures of the early helping alliance offered comparable or better prediction of treatment outcome than a range of pretreatment measures.[2-4] Research at other centers on helping alliance measures has mushroomed with measures being developed in Toronto, San Francisco, British Columbia, and Nashville.

"What made the present phase of our research possible was the foresighted, but expensive, decision to collect tape recordings of all psychotherapy sessions for all 73 patients. Since these were on seveninch reels, as was the custom in those days, we now have a roomful.

"I will end with one tidbit of recent findings about an important correlate of the helping alliance —it is basic background similarities between patient and therapist, e.g., age and religious activity. The sum of ten such similarities correlated with the helping alliance measure about .6! Apparently these similarities foster the capacity of the patient to experience being helped."

1. **Auerbach A & Luborsky L.** *A Prognostic Index for psychotherapy*. Unpublished paper, 1966.
2. **Luborsky L, Mintz J, Auerbach A, Christoph P, Bachrach H, Todd T, Johmon M, Cohen M & O'Brien C P.** Predicting the outcomes of psychotherapy—findings of the Penn Psychotherapy Project. *Arch. Gen. Psychiat.* **37**:471-81, 1980.
3. **Morgan R, Luborsky L, Crits-Christoph P, Culls H & Solomon J.** Predicting the outcomes of psychotherapy by the Penn Helping Alliance Rating Method. *Arch. Gen. Psychiat.* **39**:397-402, 1982.
4. **Luborsky L.** Helping alliances in psychotherapy: the groundwork for a study of their relationship to its outcome. (Claghorn J L, ed.) *Successful psychotherapy* New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1976. p. 92-116.