

Group analysis training for Bosnia-Herzegovina mental health professionals in the aftermath of the 1992-1995 war

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Dear Editor,

After the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), the whole population was highly psycho-traumatized (1-4). Mental health therapists did not have enough capacity to meet the needs of the population. They had a long-term need to improve their psychotherapy capacities (5, 6). Group Analysis (GA), or Group Analytic Psychotherapy, was developed in England in the 1940s by the psychotherapist and psychoanalyst Dr Sigmund Heinrich Foulkes, during his work with World War Two veterans. GA originated from psychoanalysis, systems theory, developmental and social psychology and sociology. The hard core of GA presents the belief that the individual is fundamentally social in nature.

The Institute of Group Analysis (IGA) in Zagreb is a full member of the European Group Analytic Training Institutions Network – EGATIN. Established in 1988 by fourteen enthusiastic psychiatrists, the IGA immediately became a fully-fledged Training Institute of EGATIN. Their education methods were developed and modified in accordance with the programs of the IGA London, EGATIN, and the EU requirements related to training. Today, this Institute ranks as one of the best training institutes in Europe.

IGA Zagreb expanded its activities in and out of Croatia, so they began training in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A IGA Training Program took place in the Tuzla University Clinical Centre at the Department of Psychiatry in response to the 1992-1995 war, and in order to help train mental health workers in GA to enable them to treat the

psychological trauma symptoms of war survivors.

The IGA management and its representative Professor Ljiljana Moro, together with Professor Osman Sinanović, decided during the war and in the immediate post-war period that the best way to help BH was by enhancing the expertise of its mental health professionals through training in GA. This was a long-term project which aimed to make them self-sufficient and eventually able to provide training within the country and to found their own GA organisation. Apart from providing training, this entailed providing on-going supervision and support on a regular basis.

The highly dedicated, internationally approved GA trainers: Ljiljana Moro, Tanja Frančišković, Rudolf Gregurek, Gorana Tocilj and Vedran Bilić provided complete training for trainees: neuro-psychiatrists, residents, nurses, psychologists, social workers, special educators, pediatricians, and gynecologists from several different institutions, from seven different cities in BH and Croatia. Training started during the war period, with an introduction course, and continued with Diploma courses. To be accredited GA therapists, all trainees are obliged to practice GA therapy with clients under the supervision of GA supervisors. Today there are 7 graduate Group Analysts in BH: Esmina Avdibegović, neuropsychiatrist from Tuzla; Behzad Hadžić, neuropsychiatrist from Ključ; Mevludin Hasanović, neuropsychiatrist from Tuzla; Izet Pajević, neuropsychiatrist from Tuzla; Nermina Kravić, neuropsychiatrist from Tuzla; Azra Arnautović, pediatrician from Tuzla; Zihnet Selimbašić neuropsychiatrist from Tuzla. Three of them: Izet Pajević, Esmina Avdibegović and Mevludin Hasanović are

in the process of training for educators (7). Today the IGA conducts continual training courses in Bosnia and Herzegovina in three clinical centers: Tuzla, Sarajevo and Mostar.

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