
[The Bridge between Research and Practice Program]

[The Italian-Romanian Pilot
Exchange Experience]



Program Overview

Purpose

The Bridge between Research and Practice Program is designed to facilitate the acquisition and development of practice-related skills among students that have extensive research-related knowledge and research-related skills among students that have extensive practice-related experience.

Aims

- Improve learning opportunities for students
- Produce research proposals for grant application

Framework

Four Romanian students recruited by Open Minds will participate in the four weeks long training program held in Italy in March 2013.

Four Italian students recruited by Studi Cognitivi will participate in the four weeks long training program held in Romania in July 2013.

Background

Researchers recognize the importance of collaborative work and often partner with colleagues abroad. With one fifth of the world's scientific papers co-authored internationally, there is a sustained move on the part of researchers throughout the world to engage collaboratively in the production of knowledge and innovation. A number of factors have contributed to a trend towards increased collaboration: (1) The growing complexity and cost of research, especially in disciplines requiring specialized instrumentation or facilities, tend to make collaboration an imperative;(2) Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research has a greater impact, as new ideas are explored at the intersection of previously distinct fields and as public expectations regarding the outcome of research demand holistic and global approaches to research challenges; (3) Finally, issues such as global mental health challenges, which by their nature transcend national borders, require international collaboration. Furthermore, collaboration plays a key role in the training and development of highly qualified personnel, for example through the co-supervision of students from other countries.

Description of the program

The present program aims to develop a strong and lasting collaboration between researchers from Open Minds – Center for Mental Health Research, Cluj, Romania and practitioners from Studi Cognitivi, Cognitive Psychotherapy School and Research Institute, Milan, Italy.

The Bridge between Research and Practice Program is a one month long enrichment program designed for practice-oriented students interested in developing their mental health research skills. Participants will learn about how to critically review the scientific literature, how to apply for funding, about research design, data collection, data analysis, and so on. However, the bulk of their time at Open Minds will be spent by learning how to apply for funding.

The period at Studi Cognitivi will be spent by learning foundations of cognitive psychotherapy and ways to integrate them in a clinical psychology research framework, by designing and conducting cooperative studies on the main research interests.

Activities to be undertaken

Studi Cognitivi

During the 4 weeks spent in Italy, participants will follow two general lines of activities.

Firstly, the general learning program (GLP) will include: (1) participation to seminars and workshops on cognitive psychotherapy, (2) participation to clinical supervision meetings, (3) training in assessment tools for clinical and research practice, (4) participation to research meetings and research projects.

Secondly, the project-specific program (PSP) will include all the elements needed for the development of specific collaborating research programs that will involve both Italian and Romanian students. This program will include briefing for (1) scientific literature review, (2) scientific writing, (3) search for funding resources.

Studi Cognitivi

“Studi Cognitivi Srl” is a Cognitive Psychotherapy School and Research Center recognized by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research with an official decree on the 23rd of July 2001 for Milan and San Benedetto del Tronto and 17th of March 2003 for Modena (article 3 of law no. 56/89).

“Studi Cognitivi Srl” is a society of cognitive therapists and educators affiliated to the Italian Society of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. Its aims are to (1) spread the clinical use of cognitive psychotherapy, (2) organize didactic activities and further training in cognitive psychotherapy and (3) promote research in cognitive psychotherapy and psychology.

As a Psychotherapy School, Studi Cognitivi has been licensed to hold a 4-years post-degree specialization course in Psychotherapy since 2001, with almost 450 post-graduate students across six different branches (Milan, Modena, San Benedetto del Tronto, Florence, and Bolzano).

Open Minds

In the first week of the program we will hold a series of workshops with the aim of developing the research related theoretical base of the participants. We will relate the content of these workshops to the activities that participants can get involved in within the projects that are on the agenda of the organization at that particular moment. In this way, the participants can make an informed decision about the projects they want to contribute to.

In the next three weeks of the program, the participants will be involved in the organization's projects. They will be supervised by the project leader. Such activities will consist of: research design, data preparation and analysis, scientific writing, and grant writing. The participants will be encouraged to search for a grant, in order for us to apply as partners, and in this way to fructify our partnership. At the end of each week, there will be a meeting to discuss the main challenges of the past week, problems, uncertainties and ways of improvement.

Also, throughout the program, the participants will have access to an online research platform with the purposes of knowledge consolidation and communication facilitation between the mentors and the mentees. The primary functions of this platform are as it follows: (1) to facilitate communication and knowledge transfer between the people involved in this exchange project, (2) to provide assistance with research planning and writing of research proposals, (3) to provide a statistical advisory service to facilitate data acquisition, capture, and analysis, (4) to provide information to researchers on research and research policy, (5) to produce a number of research reference guides covering all aspects of the research process.

Open Minds

We are an organization established in 2011, by the joint efforts of a group of young researchers who wanted to make a stand and to change the mental health system.

Open Minds – Center for Mental Health Research is committed to conduct research on mental health and on stigma of mental illness. Our aim is to conduct research that is relevant for practice. In this way, we try to apply the scientifically based findings and approaches to conduct activities such as: prevention campaigns, intervention programs, promotion programs, teaching and advocacy.

What guides us?

Vision

We strive for a society in which mental illness is approached with open minds.

Mission

We aim to impact people suffering from mental illness by improving their quality of life.

Values

Innovation, Rigor, Initiative, Commitment, Team-Work, Flexibility, Integrity

List of Common Topics

T1. Improving knowledge of and access to psychotherapy

Aim: To develop instruments to share information about psychological disorders, their dynamics, and ways to search for evidence based-treatments and disseminate them.

T2. A metacognitive model of desire and craving (addiction)

Aim: To develop instruments for the promotion of 'sensible drinking' among emerging adults through on-line and self-help materials.

T3. Mental Illness and Physical Health: the role of worry and anger rumination

Aim: To understand the negative impact of negative perseverative and uncontrollable thinking (e.g., worry and anger rumination) on health and cardiovascular problems.

T4. Rumination and Low Self-Esteem in Eating Disorders

Aim: To investigate whether rumination is a mechanism that accounts for the effect of low self-esteem on eating disorders, using a stress-vulnerability framework.

T5. Concern over mistakes, personal standards, social goals, and worry in social anxiety disorder.

Aim: To examine the extent to which concern over mistakes and personal standards predict social goals in socially anxious people, controlling for levels of worry..

T6. Therapeutic approaches to mental illness related self-stigma

Aim: To develop a cost-efficient protocol to address self-stigma within the therapeutic sessions and to test whether reducing self-stigma leads to increased treatment adherence.