

CARTA AO EDITOR/LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From 10-Minute Matches to Discounts: The Commercialization of Psychotherapy

Das Sessões em 10 Minutos aos Descontos: A Comercialização da Psicoterapia

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Dear Editor,

In this time of Internet influencers, we have seen a growing trend towards the promotion of appointments and apps with promises of psychotherapy. Discount codes, affiliate links, commissioned testimonials and promises of infallible results, a 10-minute session to understand the individual's 'connection' with the therapist, and so on.

Psychotherapy is defined as a set of clinical practices that use psychological approaches to treat emotional, behavioral and relational disorders.¹ It encompasses different approaches and methods, each with specific objectives, techniques and theoretical foundations. These include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), psychodynamic therapy, systemic therapy, Gestalt therapy, psychodrama, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, and interpersonal therapy, among others. Each one has a society or association registered with the Medical Council and/or Order of Psychologists.^{2,3}

In general, there are different psychotherapeutic approaches that can be used for each person and associated problem. The therapeutic decision requires an initial, individualized assessment to understand whether the psychotherapeutic model in which the therapist is trained is right for the person and their problem.¹ Usually, the initial assessment process for the application of psychotherapy lasts approximately two or three one-hour sessions, according to the theoretical approach.⁴

Unlike psychotherapy, there is psychological counselling, which does not require training certified by a society/association and is less intensive and focuses on practical solutions and skills development, rather than working on thought patterns, emotional regulation and behavior.⁵

Psychological interventions are the subject of constant scientific study, and their results and practices derive from the implementation of quality and effectiveness assessment protocols, through systematic data collection and clinical trials. In this sense, since psychology is a science with evidence, it is essential to combat unconventional therapies (e.g. reiki, family constellations), which are known as 'pseudoscience'. Based on the above, it is essential to avoid mixing these types of areas without scientific validation, which can promote misleading and harmful beliefs, into a so-called psychotherapeutic approach. This mercantile approach to psychotherapy, in which mental health is exploited in a frivolous and inconsequential way, can easily result in gross errors, the application of ineffective strategies and, ultimately, even contribute to a worsening of the individual's state of health.

We know that the therapeutic relationship requires trust, empathy and a deep understanding of

the individual's needs, factors that can hardly be properly assessed in such a short period of time, and so sequentially, as if it were a monthly subscription service. Furthermore, the practice of offering discounts for psychology can convey the idea that psychological care is a disposable, marketable product, when in reality it is a specialized, delicate, professional and above all rigorous service that has a direct impact on the individual's mental health and well-being. This kind of commercial approach is dangerous, jeopardizing the importance of psychotherapy and compromising the quality of such a noble and fundamental practice. Urgent measures are needed to reinforce the ethics and seriousness of psychotherapy, regulating and controlling the entry of these entities that take advantage of human frailty with the sole and ultimate goal of their own economic advantage. ■

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