

Indirect therapy for children and adolescents: preliminary results of a cooperation between paediatrics and psychotherapists

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Abstract

Accordingly with the Systemic Theory we propose Indirect Brief Strategic Therapy (IBST) to parents requesting help for their children avoiding to make the child or the adolescent 'pathological'. The Systemic Theory takes in account that the change of the behaviour of any member of a social System (e.g. the family) leads to the change of that one of the other members (JH Weakland). Primary condition of this therapeutic approach is the involvement of the parent as a co-therapist; this makes the recovery of the physiologically asymmetric relationship between the adult and the child possible.

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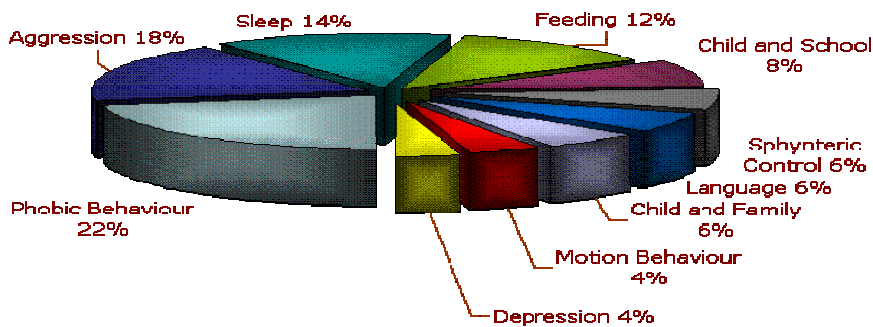
Aims. The aim of our study is to verify the efficacy and the efficiency of IBST for children and adolescents with a ‘psychological problem’ referred by their parents.

Patients and Methods. 10 Paediatricians have been enrolled in a working team with the purpose to highlight the potential of TBSI, to verify the efficacy of this kind of therapeutic approach on actual cases, to propose some instruments to use during their daily activity. We have held two meetings per month during the last two years.

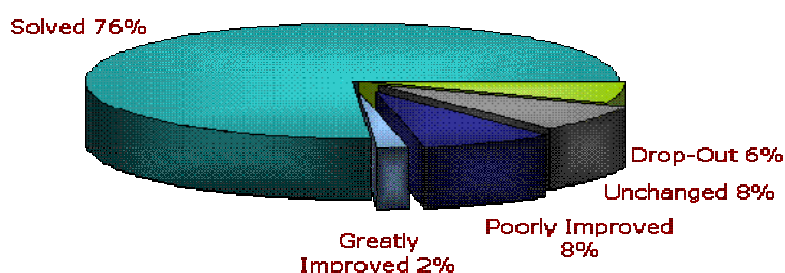
In this period of two years 50 cases with a mean age of 9.1 years (range 2-17) have been evaluated. In most of cases parents asked for help for phobic behaviours, aggression and sleep problems (phobic behaviour 22%, aggression 18%; sleep 14%; feeding 12%; child and school 8%; sphyncter control 6%; language 6%; child and family 6%; motion behaviour 4%; depression 4%; behaviour changes 2%) (TAB. I).

TAB. I Kind of Problems

**modified classification by J. De Ajuriaguerra e D. Marcelli*



TAB II Results



The request for males has been three times bigger than for females (72% and 28% respectively). 11 out the adolescents subjects that showed the intention to take part in the treatment have been directly involved at the same time of the TBSI performed with their parents.

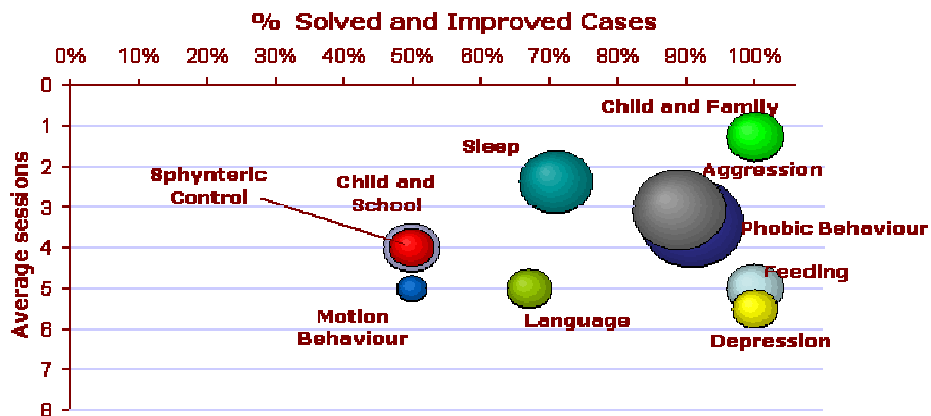
Results. A quick resolution of the problems we dealt with has been obtained. In particular, the average number of sessions for the completely solved cases has been 3.5 (range 1-9). As far as the efficacy of the treatment is concerned: solved cases were 76%; greatly improved cases 2%; poorly improved 8%; unchanged cases 8%; worse 0%; drop out 6% (TAB II).

Discussion. Our preliminary results are surprising in relation to the quick resolution of the problems we dealt with. Most of parents easily accepted the suggestion of TBSI. The cooperation with Paediatricians allowed an improvement of the efficacy of the therapy. The circularity of information improved the reliability of this kind of intervention.

These results highlighted the efficacy and the efficiency of TBSI that showed to be brief and flexible (TAB. III).

This is an on working study; our preliminary results, if confirmed, allow to consider IBST a first choice treatment of children and adolescents problems.

TAB III Efficacy and efficiency



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