

**Workshop 1: How valid is our understanding of validity
in psychotherapy research?**
by Femke Truijens, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands
on Friday 25th September 2020 (9-noon UK time)

To register for the workshop go [here](#)



Abstract: The Evidence-Based Treatment movement promotes an array of methodological standards and procedures to safeguard the quality of treatments. Default psychotherapy research uses quantitative symptom measures to assess symptom development pre-to-post treatment in (randomized) controlled settings. In this workshop, we go back to the very basis of conducting psychotherapy research, by scrutinizing how these default methods and procedures produce ‘the data’ that we as researchers take as the basis of evidence generation. In this, we will take ‘the numbers’ as words in a clinical story and we follow the stories on their way to become ‘the evidence’.

In the first part of this workshop, I present ‘June’ and ‘Amy’, two patient-participants in the Ghent Psychotherapy Study (Meganck et al., 2017). Using qualitative analysis, we scrutinized how these patient-participants experienced the administration of much used validated self-report measures (e.g., SCL-90, BDI-II, IIP, OQ-45). Their experiences were in line with known issues of ‘fitting’ experiences to pre-formulated items and pre-structured response scales, expectancy effects and administrator-respondent dynamics, and response shifts. Beyond these known – but seldomly tackled! – issues, the *act* of questionnaire administration *changed* how June and Amy understood and experienced their primary complaints. In fact, the questionnaire administration fueled a clinical change process alongside the therapeutic process under study. These findings raise the question whether the validation of measures as such is sufficient to safeguard overall validity of our data and evidence.

We use this talk, secondly, as starting point for a practical exploration of validity issues that we as psychotherapy researchers experience in day-to-day research practice. I warmly invite psychology scholars, researchers, clinicians and students to join the discussion, to derive multiple perspectives on the usefulness *and* the limits of current validity terminology to derive sound and useful evidence in psychotherapy research. Given the goal-orientation of medical and psychotherapy research and the increasing influence of scientific evidence on the organization of clinical practice, it is vital to discuss how and where validity issues are encountered and how these can be evaluated by the current understanding of validity terminology. Topics of discussion can be:

- Where do working medical and psychotherapy researchers encounter validity issues in their work?
- How could validity terminology be broadened to capture *research practice* sufficiently, without losing the rigor of terms?
- What do ‘valid evidence’ and ‘valid research’ mean to clinicians in their daily work?
- How could an insufficient consideration of validity affect daily clinical practice?
- What aspects would be suggested by clinicians to increase ‘valid’ research and valid evidence that is useful towards clinical practice?

Femke L. Truijens holds a PhD in Clinical Psychology and a MA in Philosophy of Science. She works as assistant professor at Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands, and as postdoctoral guest researcher at Ghent University, Belgium. Her research is focused on validity and data collection processes in psychotherapy research and clinical practice. She worked on several randomized controlled psychotherapy studies, and she uses qualitative and mixed research methods to explore how patients experience questionnaire administration in the context of therapy and research. In postdoc research, Femke studies how validity of Routine Outcome Measurement is considered and secured 'in the action' by patients, therapists and policy makers. Femke's mission is to dust off the term validity, which is not just a topic for grumpy old psychometricians but a clinically relevant question that is at play in each researcher's and clinician's daily practice. Further, Femke teaches Qualitative Research Methods, Severe Mental Illness in the Recovery Paradigm, Clinical Assessment, Research Ethics and Philosophy of Science. Finally, she works as psychotherapeutic counsellor for gifted adults in her private practice in The Netherlands.