ABSTRACT - INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHIATRY CONFERENCE 2026

Abstract title: Meaning-oriented care in psychiatry: a scoping review

Abstract

Meaning and spirituality are increasingly recognized as connected to mental health and recovery. Yet empirical knowledge on meaning-oriented care in psychiatry seems limited and fragmented. This gap is particularly relevant in increasingly secularized contexts, where traditional religious frameworks no longer provide self-evident meaning-making resources, alongside growing attention to holistic care that addresses existential and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing. Approaches such as meaning-centered psychotherapy, existential therapy, spiritual care, religious or spiritually integrated therapies, and less formalized practices in which meaning is attended to within the care relationship, seem to share a common orientation. This raises questions about how they are conceptualized and operationalized, and whether they are comparable.

A scoping review is being conducted to understand the extent, range and nature of empirical knowledge on meaning-oriented care in psychiatry (2015-2025), exploring (1) how meaning-oriented care approaches are conceptualized and operationalized, (2) what is known about these practices, and (3) what gaps exist.

A systematic search combined terms relating to meaning, psychiatric context, and a broad range of caregivers. The review included empirical studies in English and Dutch, across qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method designs, and empirical literature reviews.

In this presentation I will discuss findings of this scoping review and describe how it informs the subsequent phase of ethnographic fieldwork into meaning-oriented care in Dutch mental health care.