

Purpose

To assist trainees and psychotherapy supervisors with psychotherapy case discussions as required by the Psychotherapy Written Case. For more detail, please refer to the Psychotherapy Written Case Policy and Procedure.

Note: the psychotherapy case discussion is a different assessment with different requirements to the Case-based Discussion (CbD) Workplace-Based Assessment (WBA) used throughout training.

Introduction

The Psychotherapy Written Case assessment comprises the provision of at least 40 sessions of psychotherapy informed by psychodynamic principles and reflection on this therapy through submission of a formal case report.

During the psychotherapy process, trainees must participate in three formative psychotherapy case discussions about the patient whose therapy is the subject of the Psychotherapy Written Case with their psychotherapy supervisor to encourage reflection on the treatment progress and provide opportunities to receive qualitative feedback.

Trainees must submit three completed psychotherapy case discussion forms to the College with their Psychotherapy Written Case.

Focus

Case discussions should occur during the early, middle and late phases of the psychotherapy and should focus on pivotal points or milestones in the therapy process or on treatment dilemmas and/or emerging issues.

The supervisor should mark on the Psychotherapy case discussion form the topics covered in each psychotherapy case discussion.

How to undertake a psychotherapy case discussion

1. During the early, middle and late phases of the psychotherapy, the trainee should organise an individual supervision session with their psychotherapy supervisor for their psychotherapy case discussion.
2. The trainee discusses their psychotherapy case with their supervisor.
3. When required, the supervisor should question the trainee about key issues pertinent to the phase of therapy.
4. Following the discussion, the supervisor should facilitate a positive interaction and give constructive feedback to the trainee.
5. The supervisor rates the trainee's performance using the 9-point scale on the psychotherapy case discussion form.
6. The trainee and supervisor should discuss and agree on the next steps for the case and then both trainee and supervisor should sign the form.

Assessment criteria

The aim of psychotherapy case discussions is to enable psychotherapy supervisors to provide systematic assessment and structured feedback across the following key areas.

- **Assessment** – diagnosis and differential diagnosis.
- **Formulation** – the ability to provide a formulation that demonstrates longitudinal and recent variables that have impacted upon the patient's current presentation.
- **Risk assessment and management** – appropriate assessment and management of risks associated with psychotherapeutic treatment, including considering chronic baseline risk and factors that would predict a shift from baseline, eg. therapist's leave.
- **Medical treatment** – focused and appropriate investigations and interpretation of the results, integrating knowledge into a comprehensive understanding of the patient and any implications for psychotherapy.
- **Psychotherapeutic processes** – discussion of the therapeutic process including reflection on the nature of the therapeutic relationship.
- **Note keeping** – accurate and up-to-date progress notes including appropriate attention to confidentiality, etc.
- **Professionalism** – appropriate professional standards demonstrated in all aspects of the case, eg. confidentiality, respect, time keeping, maintaining records, appropriate doctor–patient relationships, boundary maintenance, etc.

Feedback

The feedback given after a psychotherapy case discussion is an important aspect of the encounter. The quality of feedback can be enhanced by encouraging self-assessment and should highlight the positive aspects of the discussion as well as any suggestions for improvement and any agreed actions or goals.

Supervisors should also consider how the trainee demonstrates clinical judgement through an integrated understanding of patient and therapy mode selection and management of relationship issues and provide specific feedback.

Guidance for discussion

The following topics are intended to assist psychotherapy supervisors direct psychotherapy case discussions and elicit further information from trainees. They may also guide trainees to understand important focal points for discussions regarding their case.

Discussions are not limited to these topics and other questions may be used to prompt focused discussion about the case at the psychotherapy supervisor's discretion.

Discussion topics:

- psychodynamic formulation
- suitability, indications and contraindications of the patient for psychotherapy
- the developmental issues and underlying conflicts, with reference to theory and techniques
- transference and countertransference experiences including in relation to significant events in therapy such as therapist's leave
- frame, setting and boundaries of therapy including particular issues such as setting and maintaining the frame of therapy, time keeping, gift giving, etc.
- termination and appropriate transfer of the patient for continued therapy/care where appropriate.