

Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy

Department of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy

Address

Schwabachanlage 6
91054 Erlangen
Phone: +49 9131 8534596
Fax: +49 9131 8534153
www.psychosomatik.uk-erlangen.de

Head of Division

Prof. Dr. (TR) Yesim Erim

Contact

Heike Dahlem
Phone: +49 9131 8534596
Fax: +49 9131 8534153
psychosomatik@uk-erlangen.de

Research focus

- Psycho-oncology
- Migration and mental health
- Transplantation medicine
- Somatoform disorders and the persistent somatoform pain disorder
- Eating disorders, obesity
- Work ability of medical staff
- Early intervention in the workplace
- Biological psychotherapy research

Structure of the Division

Professorship: 1

Personnel: 69

- Doctors (of Medicine): 12
- Scientists: 5 (thereof funded externally: 3)
- Graduate students: 26

Clinical focus areas

- Eating disorders
- Obesity
- Somatoform disorders including persistent pain disorder
- Posttraumatic stress disorders
- Psycho-oncology

Research

The research of the Division of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy focuses on psycho-oncology, migration and mental health, transplantation medicine, somatoform disorders (persistent somatoform pain disorders), eating disorders, obesity, work ability of medical staff, early intervention in the workplace, and biological psychotherapy research.

Psycho-oncology

PI: Prof. Dr. Y. Erim, PD Dr. E. Morawa, M.Sc. C. Schug, Dipl.-Psych. M. Lieb
Current research projects:

- Multicentre randomised controlled intervention study on web-based mindfulness and skill-based stress reduction for patients with cancer (REDUCT) Cooperation project with the LVR Clinic Essen; funding: BMBF
- Psycho-oncological care study to examine the potential target group and their satisfaction with the web-based skills and mindfulness training "Make It".

- Risk-adapted aftercare for uveal melanomas
Cooperation project with the West German Tumour Centre Essen; Funding: German Cancer Aid
- Disease concepts, coping with illness and unmet needs in oncological patients with special consideration of the migration background
Funding: ELAN program
- Resilience and fear of prognosis in female patients seeking a second opinion (in cooperation with the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Prof. Dr. M. Lux)
- Implementation of a regular paper-screening and a taxonomy of psychooncological interventions in the psycho-oncology services.
Furthermore, the doctoral thesis on the construction and validation of a questionnaire on patient competence in coping with cancer was completed and published.

Migration and mental health

PI: Prof. Dr. Y. Erim, PD Dr. E. Morawa, M.Sc. A. Borho

Considering the demographic development in Germany showing a continuous increase of persons with a migrant background (in 2019 26% of the total population), research is indicated not only on specific burdens, but also on resources of this group, and since November especially of people with a refugee background. Prof. Erim has published a special issue on flight and migration in the Journal of Psychosomatic Research. During the reporting period, two doctoral theses on traumatic experiences, complaints and coping with illness among Syrian refugees and the intercultural opening of hospitals and rehabilitation facilities for psychosomatic medicine and psychotherapy in Bavaria were completed and published. The current research projects deal with health services research. These include a study on the effectiveness of (partially) inpatient psychosomatic treatment for patients with and without a migration background and an ELAN-funded study on the mental health and posttraumatic stress disorders of Arabic-speaking asylum seekers. The Department of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy is also investigating verbal violence in institutions towards migrants and refugees in a project funded by the Emerging Fields Initiative (EFI) of FAU and the STAEDTLER Foundation in cooperation with the Centre for Area Studies (Prof. D. P. Bendel), the Chair of Romance Language Philology (Prof. Dr. S. Jansen) and the Chair of Health Psychology (Prof. Dr. N. Rohleder).

Transplantation medicine

PI: Prof. Dr. Y. Erim, Dipl.-Psych. M. Lieb
In cooperation with the Department of Medicine 4, the predictors of adherence after renal transplantation were examined. Based on the results of this study which analyzed patient reported outcomes as well as cognitive tests, a training to optimize the adherence and health

behavior was developed and manualized. Within the framework of the research group Emerging Fields Initiative (EFI), a follow-up study of living kidney donors was conducted with particular emphasis on the perceived autonomy as well as fatigue complaints. Three doctoral projects were finished and published during the reporting period.

Somatoform disorders and the persistent somatoform pain disorder

PI: Prof. Dr. Y. Erim

In the etiology of persistent somatoform pain disorder, early childhood adversities, an uncertain binding style, and altered cerebral activations (dysfunctional processing of pain and distress) are postulated as important factors and investigated in this study in cooperation with the Department of Neuroradiology (Prof. Dr. A. Dörfler). In addition to psychometric measurements, neuroimaging techniques are used. Two doctoral theses have been published and are nearing completion.

Eating disorders, obesity

PI: Prof. Dr. Y. Erim, Johannes Krehbiel, PD Dr. G. Paslakis

Within the framework of two doctoral theses (one was already completed during the reporting period), the Approach-Avoidance Task (AAT) paradigm was used to investigate the approach-avoidance behaviour towards food in patients with eating disorders in comparison to a healthy and obese control group. In the process, images of high-calorie as well as low-calorie foods are pulled or pushed away. The study aims to create an innovative implicit therapy component. Besides, a study on eating disorders is carried out using a basic research approach. In a prospective, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial, the effect of substitution with an estrogen-progestin combination in adult women with anorexia nervosa is investigated.

Work ability of medical staff

PI: Prof. Dr. Y. Erim, PD Dr. E. Morawa, PD Dr. C. Rhein, M.Sc. C. Schug, Dipl.-Psych. M. Lieb, M.Sc. A. Borho

The VOICE study, funded by the BMBF as part of the National Research Network University Medicine (NUM) and carried out as a joint project by the university hospitals of Erlangen, Bonn, Ulm, Cologne and Dresden, aims to identify specific stresses and problems in the context of the COVID 19 crisis as well as sources of personal resilience in the structural, social and spiritual spheres among employees in the health sector and to investigate any resulting stress symptoms such as sleep disorders, but also indications of traumatization, depression, and anxiety disorders. In addition, work conditions as well as aspects of work-life balance and resources will be surveyed. Based on the data, possible connections between stress/resources and

mental health/quality of life as well as possible differences between genders/ specialties/ settings are to be uncovered. Furthermore, protective and risk factors of mental health as well as high-risk groups including their frequency and composition (age, gender, occupational group, etc.) are to be identified and typical courses of coping processes are to be examined. The first two survey waves (T1: April to July 2020, N = 8071 and T2: November 2020 to January 2021, N = approx. 7200) have already taken place in the reporting period. Depending on the further course of the pandemic, additional measurements may also take place.

As an extension of the VOICE study, the STRESS-MONITOR study, funded by the Bavarian State Ministry of Science and Art, is currently being conducted. The study is to develop an early warning system that indicates overload of medical care staff at an early stage and is based on subjective (psychometric recording of potential workplace-related risk factors and resources) and objective parameters (heart rate variability and stress parameters).

Early intervention in the workplace

PI: Prof. Dr. Y. Erim, M.Sc. S. Hondong

The BMBF-funded Germany-wide randomised and controlled study on the effectiveness of psychosomatic consultation hours in the workplace is being conducted in cooperation with the University Hospital Ulm and other partners. The aim of the study is to ensure rapid and professional diagnosis and psychotherapeutic treatment of psychologically stressed employees directly in the company through the psychosomatic consultation hour and to test the effectiveness of the service.

Teaching

The Department of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy is intensively involved in curricular teaching in medical studies, e.g. within the framework of the cross-sectional subject Q 14 together with the Department of Anaesthesiology and the Department of Neurology as well as in the course "Introduction to Clinical Medicine (EKM)". The obligatory subject of psychosomatics in medical studies consists of a main lecture and a practical course in small groups, in which simulation patients with standardized practice cases are used. Students can also take part in the elective subjects "Application-oriented introduction to psychosomatic research for medical students" and "Neurobiological basis of stress-induced disorders for medical students". As part of the Medical Process Management course, the Department of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy is already represented in the first semester with a seminar on "Communication and Cooperation Aspects in the Health System". The Department offers a teaching export for the Master's program in Psychology. Advanced training for psychological psychotherapists-in-training is also provided. Master's theses and medical doctorates are supervised.

Selected publications

Aderhold C, Morawa E, Paslakis G, Erim Y. Entwicklung und Validierung eines Fragebogens zur Patientenkompetenz im Umgang mit einer Krebserkrankung (PUK). *Z Psychosom Med*

Psychother. 2019 Sep;65(3):239-256.

Kobel F, Morawa E, Erim Y: Effectiveness of inpatient psychotherapy for patients with and without migratory background: Do they benefit equally? *Front Psychiatry.* 2020; 11:542.

Lieb M, Tagay S, Breidenstein A, Hepp T, Le Guin CHD, Scheel J, Lohmann DR, Bornfeld N, Teufel M, Erim Y. Psychosocial impact of prognostic genetic testing in uveal melanoma patients: a controlled prospective clinical observational study. *BMC Psychol.* 2020;8(1):8.

Lieb M, Hepp T, Schiffer M, Opgenoorth M, Erim Y. Accuracy and concordance of measurement methods to assess non-adherence after renal transplantation - a prospective study. *BMC Nephrol.* 2020;21(1):114.

Borho A, Viazminsky A, Morawa E, Schmitt GM, Georgiadou E, Erim Y. The prevalence and risk factors for mental distress among Syrian refugees in Germany: a register-based follow-up study. *BMC Psychiatry.* 2020;20(1):362.

Meyer E, Morawa E, Nacak Y, Rösch J, Doerfler A, Forster C, Erim Y. Insular Cortical Thickness in Patients With Somato-form Pain Disorder: Are There Associations With Symptom Severity and Childhood Trauma? *Front Psychiatry.* 2020;11:497100.