

For Release

SCIENCE IS PROVING FREUD RIGHT

Studies Show That Psychoanalysis is An Evidence-Based Treatment

January 11, 2016 - New York, NY—At the 2017 National Meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA), Mark Solms, Ph.D., Chair of Neuropsychology at the University of Cape Town, South Africa and Director of the Science Department for APsaA, will present an overview of the current scientific standing of psychoanalysis. He will address its core theoretical claims about the human mind and present data showing that psychoanalytic treatment is as good as, or better than, other evidence-based treatments in the mental health field today.

“There are professionals and members of the general public who still think Sigmund Freud’s theories are all wrong. But it is possible he was so far ahead of his time that science is just now catching up,” said Harriet Wolfe, president of the Association. “Many of us can agree that Freud was wrong on some culturally-based issues, but on the value of key psychoanalytic principles, the ones which we use today to help people suffering with emotional anguish, it looks like he was right all along.”

Mark Solms is founder of the journal *Neuropsychanalysis*, an interdisciplinary journal for psychoanalysis and the neurosciences which is blending psychological study of the mind (emotions, memories, thoughts etc.) with modern biological research on the brain. He will review three central psychoanalytic concepts about the human mind, all of them ideas first developed by Freud, and show how contemporary psychoanalysts use these principles to treat mental health issues today. The core concepts are that (1) infants are not blank slates and are born with innate needs, which Freud called the “id”; (2) as we develop, our main task is to learn how to meet these needs in the world, through what Freud called “ego” development; and (3) most of the ways we use to meet our needs are unconscious. These concepts, which were once controversial, are now widely accepted by neighbouring disciplines.

Contemporary psychoanalysts’ work flows from these concepts, namely from the understanding that psychological patients suffer mainly from feelings and that their emotions have meanings, specifically they represent unsatisfied needs. The main goal of treatment then is to help patients learn more effective ways of meeting their needs, leading to better emotion regulation. This is done, in part, by unravelling the unconscious solutions that give rise to their unwanted feelings.

Solms will discuss studies showing that psychoanalytic psychotherapy is a highly effective form of treatment. For example meta-analyses of all psychotherapy outcome studies typically reveal effect sizes of between 0.73 and 0.85, compared to effectiveness of antidepressant only treatment which typically achieves effect sizes of between 0.24 and 0.31. Psychoanalytic psychotherapy is as effective as other forms of psychotherapy (e.g. CBT) but there is consistent evidence to suggest that the effects last longer and even increase after treatment ends.

The presentation will take place on Friday, January 20th from 12pm to 1:30pm during the Presidential Symposium at the Waldorf Astoria. For more information about the meeting, please visit www.apsa.org.

About APsaA

The American Psychoanalytic Association is a professional organization of psychoanalysts with approximately 3,000 members. The Association is comprised of psychiatrists, psychologists, social

workers, educators, researchers and students who have an interest in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic therapy. Visit www.apsa.org for more information.

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