



TO PROTECT THE NEUROCOGNITIVE REHABILITATION AND THE NEUROCOGNITIVE REHABILITATION TRAINING COURSES

We are facing the recent spread of online-training opportunities, including Neurocognitive Rehabilitation online training courses, due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

The society we are living in has witnessed a constant growth of online communication, which often has been offered as an alternative to reduce costs, be attractive for both the patient and the therapist and to overcome the obstacles of geographic distances.

While considering that this could represent a helpful tool in an emergency such as the current one, there are critical issues regarding the therapist-patient relationship and the online training methodology, especially considering the basic conceptual aspects of human recovery inside the Neurocognitive Rehabilitation.

Professor *Perfetti* has always defined the therapist-patient relationship in the Neurocognitive Rehabilitation is not a one-way relationship, but it is configured as a "therapeutic system". This system entails a reciprocal modifiability in a way that can never be defined beforehand but is gradually drawn from what emerges in the interaction itself. The patient's assessment, essential to any reasoning and always the first step of any rehabilitation treatment, is defined through direct contact and dialogue therapist-patient as well as a physical interaction. Online assessments do not allow any physical interaction, essential for the therapist, and certainly limits the non-verbal communication by reducing the possibility to comprehend the intentional nuances linked to the presence of looks, body, and linguistic exchanges. Assessing patients with complex neurological diseases requires all these elements, therefore online assessment is not precise and reliable.

We firmly disagree with the idea of online exercises. These exercises are rather standardized, which clashes with the neurocognitive interpretation of the exercise, as it is individually designed for the patient's recovery. The exercise taught online and performed at patient's home by the family or acquaintances do not ensure correct therapeutic guidance of the patient. If an exercise is proposed in this way, it cannot be done precisely and re-modulated regarding the changes it generates on the patient. On the other hand, a family member can perform the exercise just mechanically and repetitively because he does not know the reasoning that determined that task, and therefore the therapist doesn't know what to expect, or how to proceed in relation to the patient's responses.

Relating to the Neurocognitive Rehabilitation, training and research are traditionally proposed together and rooted in the therapy room with the patient. The therapy room is, according to *Carlo Perfetti*, a place of science and the training cannot be exempt from working in contact with the patient.

The training, in analogy with what happens in the relationship with the patient, it is not a transmission of pre-established knowledge, but sharing knowledge that is built and

organized over the years, yet constantly revised and updated with new contributions of science and the experiences with the patient. Neurocognitive knowledge is a complex and inventive knowledge, which requires constant study, reasoning and discussion on top of the reality of everyday life in the therapy room.

This practical aspect appears crucial by Professor *Perfetti*: "*the theoretical course alone is worthless because rehabilitation should end up with an exercise. The rehabilitative psalms end in the glory of the exercise. The theoretical knowledge must be verified with practice, studying the exercises, otherwise you will not be therapists, you will be great scholars, great physiologists, great neuroscientists but certainly not therapists*" (Carlo Perfetti 2003, introduction *Centro Montesano* cassette collection).

Over the years, the demand to define a unitary Neurocognitive knowledge and language led structure various training: introductory courses, basic courses, first-level courses, monographs, up to the creation of the *International School of Neurocognitive Rehabilitation - Carlo Perfetti*. This school represents a postgraduate school that provides to the learner, with the first three years, the qualification of *Neurocognitive Rehabilitator Expert* and with the following two years, the qualification of *Neurocognitive Rehabilitation Professor*.

Within all training activities, the practical part is considered fundamental and not replaceable. It needs to include different levels, in terms of actual time spent with the patients and gradually more complex tasks according to the level of the student. Every training includes internship periods at the *Study Center of Neurocognitive Rehabilitation - Villa Miari*, or other places recognized as internships centers in Italy and abroad, led by qualified teachers, to learn the patient's observation, the neurocognitive interpretation of the pathology, the problem's identification, the elaboration of solutions, the construction of coherent exercises with the rehabilitative reasoning and the actual ability to propose them.

Online training, which does not provide close and direct contact between learners, teachers and patients, cannot, therefore, be considered suitable for the neurocognitive therapists and professors' training.

As experienced neurocognitive therapists who work daily alongside patients, we strongly dissociate from any rehabilitation carried out exclusively online, and as Neurocognitive Rehabilitation Professors of the *International School of Rehabilitation Neurocognitive "Carlo Perfetti"* we dissociate from all entirely distance learning initiatives of training courses in Neurocognitive Rehabilitation.

Considering the current situation, which represents an emergency for a limited period, we suggest to use online training only for theoretical lessons and only for the emergency period linked to the Covid-19 outbreak, planning adequate face-to-face training in certified places as soon as the need for social distancing is over.

We therefore advise all those therapists interested in the Neurocognitive Rehabilitation to be distrustful of any offer that provides solely online training and to trust only on recognized and authorized training courses.

We also want to advise the patients, whose recovery is directed all our attention and commitment, to seek qualified therapists, contacting the secretary of the *Study Center - Villa Miari*, in their area of residence, to be able to take a serious and effective therapeutic path.

There are no substitutes for therapeutic and pedagogical relationships.

There are no online shortcuts for learning.

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