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PROMOTING THE ETHICAL PRACTICE OF SAND THERAPY

Editor's Commentary

Many Views of Our Sand Therapy World

Linda E. Homeyer

An important, and exciting, milestone in sand therapy occurred just a few months ago. The findings of a meta-analysis of sandplay therapy involving eight countries and 40 research studies was published. Conducted by Jacqueline Wiersman, Lorraine Freedle, Rachel McRoberts, and Kenneth Solberg (2022), this first-ever multi-national meta-analysis in sand therapy provides clinicians using sand therapy with a scientific basis for our work. Analyzing 40 studies from eight countries resulted in a cumulative total of 1,284 subjects. This is the value of a meta-analysis, of course, providing a more significant number of subjects for statistical analysis. The researchers found an overall large effect size, 1.10 (*Hedges' g*). A previous sandplay therapy meta-analysis of South Korean studies (Lee & Jang, 2015, cited in Wiersman et al., 2022) found an effect size of *Hedges' g* = 1.089.



Wiersman et al. (2022) identified important findings that sandplay therapy was equally effective for internalizing and externalizing behaviors and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) behaviors compared to control groups.

The article begins with a brief review of sandplay, the Jungian-Kalffian approach to sand therapy. The authors articulate that

. . . sandplay emphasizes self-directed, nonverbal, hands-on expressive work without interference on the part of the therapist. Sandplay is often confused with sandtray therapy. Both have origins in Margaret Lowenfeld's World Technique (Lowenfeld, 1939) but have evolved somewhat differently. (Wiersman, 2022, p. 198)

It is crucial for the future of sand therapy research that the clinical theory or approach used in research is clearly identified. Wiersman et al. (2022) began with 1,715 studies from 16 countries.

As noted, only 40 from eight countries met their screening criteria for inclusion in the meta-analysis.

Generalization to other approaches of sand therapy should be made with caution. While using similar materials (sand, tray, miniature figures), the studies included were specific to Jungian-Kalffian theory, sandplay. It is, however, a giant step forward in the scientific validation for all sand therapy.

Lorraine Freedle also wrote a paper, *Sandplay Therapy: An Evidence-based Treatment* (2022), placing the above-mentioned meta-analysis in the hierarchy of evidence for treatment efficacy. The article, which was published in the [Journal of Sandplay Therapy](#), has open-access on their website, as are other of their research article. You can download and read it from there.

As the research article in this issue indicates (*Sand Therapy Standards: Views from the Field*), awareness of the global perspective of how sand therapy practitioners view their work and their professional development lends a broader vision and understanding of the field of sand therapy. Jessica Stone and I were intrigued by the responses, which included 208 respondents from 15 countries. The meta view of our micro work informs us all. Just stage one of a three-stage research project on sand therapy competencies, we are pleased to have offered it to WASTP in this inaugural issue.

Completing our first issue, the book reviewed by Tammi Van Hollander and Kay Pantier, *The Embodied Brain and Sandtray Therapy*, also shares perspectives of sand therapy work by authors in three countries. Indeed, many views of our world!

Read the entire research articles for details and specifics:

Freedle, L. R. (2022). Sandplay therapy: An evidence-based treatment. *Journal of Sandplay Therapy*, 31(1).

Wiersman, J. K., Freedle, L. R., McRoberts, R., & Solberg, K. B. (2022). A meta-analysis of sandplay therapy treatment outcomes. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 21(4), 197-215.