

Theory and practice

Rwanda: Exchange at eye level

In Kaiserslautern and Klingenstein, the delegation gives an account of their journey to Africa

Two psychiatric clinics for twelve million inhabitants? In Germany unthinkable, in Rwanda it is reality. And this was not the only insight the Pfalzkllinikum nine-member delegation brought back from their two-week visit to Ndera at the end of January.

Not as planned, but nevertheless constructive - with these words Dr. Grudrun Auert, manager of the project, summarized the trip to Rwanda. At the occasion of two information sessions in Klingenstein and Kaiserslautern the travelers showed many photos and shared their impressions with the Pfalzkllinikum employees. The Pfalzkllinikum delegation's visit to the psychiatric hospital in Ndera

aimed at triggering a long-term professional exchange between the two institutions. The project was initiated by Jean Marie Bizimana, assistant doctor in the clinic in Kaiserslautern. He is from Rwanda and had established contact with the hospital in Ndera.

The travelers found out quickly that both institutions work very differently. In Rwanda for example the treatment methods are controlled more centrally. „So we were not allowed to carry out our workshop in de-escalation as prepared“, Joachim Hoffmann and Theresa Schütt said. „Finally we developed a guideline for de-escalation in joint work groups.“ Theresa Schütt was particularly impressed by the Rwandan employees' commitment, especially in occupational therapy which, in Rwanda, is very much oriented towards the patient's individual needs.

381 beds for 12 million inhabitants

The hospital in Ndera near the capital city of Kigali is the largest acute psychiatric institution throughout Rwanda apart from a small mental hospital in Huye (the former Butare) located in the South of the country. Both clinics have a total of 357 beds in psychiatry and 24 beds in neurology - for twelve million inhabitants. „The size of the country, however, is that of Rhineland-Palatinate and the Saarland together“, Joachim Hoffmann continues his report. „Despite its central location most people cannot reach the hospital. In addition, it is chronically overcrowded.“

This also holds true for community-based psychiatry: „Right next to the hospital there is a building complex currently hosting 30 people. However, it was built for only 15 to 16 residents“, Birgit Fuchs says. „Moreover, the services cannot be compared. In Rwanda only out-patient services regarding medical care are offered. Direct work in the



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The group from Pfalzlinikum was impressed by the liveliness and colourfulness of Rwanda's streets.

communities takes place in a very rudimentary form – also due to a lack in resources.”

Patient „living“ in the clinic for 14 years.

The case conferences were similar to those at Pfalzlinikum. They are an essential component of quality management and the group took part twice, once together with an external supervisor. The vivid discussions revealed the differences between the institutions regarding the integrative treatment services established in Germany, ranging from in-patient to out-patient services, and the therapeutic possibilities. So the presented patient suffering from schizophrenia has been „living“ in the clinic for 14 years. In the context of a case presentation of an addicted female patient the delegation demonstrated the application of the NADA* acupuncture method for the treatment of addictions. The Rwandan colleagues watched this demonstration with great interest.

Beside the professional exchange the travelers also got their fair share of personal impressions. They were fascinated by the Rwandans' hospitality, the colourfulness of the streets crowded with lots of bicycles, mopeds and pets as well as by the strong presence of women in society.

Pfalzlinikum plans to combine its forces with the institutions from Rwanda and the operator of the two institutions, the „Brothers of Charity“ originating from Ghent, Belgium. „In October eight colleagues from Rwanda are going

to visit us here at Pfalzlinikum for three weeks“, CEO Paul Bomke said. „Taking an interdisciplinary approach, the colleagues here are going to support them. Our aim is to stabilize the joint learning process and the exchange at eye level.“

 Text: Elena Posth and Romina Männl
Photos: Birgit Fuchs and Joachim Hoffmann

*NADA stands for National Acupuncture Detoxification Association

The Pfalzlinikum delegation in Rwanda:

Paul Bomke, Geschäftsführer; Dr. Gudrun Auert, head physician of the Clinic Group of the Northwestern Palatinate; Birgit Fuchs, head of the „Care,Foster and Live“ department; Dr. Michael Brünger, head physician of Pfalzinstitut – Clinic for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Psychosomatics and Psychotherapy; Joachim Hoffmann, project and process coordinator at Pfalzlinikum as well as of the Clinic in Kaiserslautern; Theresa Schütt, health nurse; Birgit Fritzenwanker, occupational therapist; Lorena Yomona, training to be a psychological psychotherapist and Jean Marie Bizimana, assistant doctor.