



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI VERONA  
DIPARTIMENTO DI SANITÀ PUBBLICA E MEDICINA DI COMUNITÀ  
SEZIONE DI PSICHIATRIA E PSICOLOGIA CLINICA  
DOTTORATO DI RICERCA IN SCIENZE PSICOLOGICHE E PSICHIATRICHE  
CICLO XXVI

## ABSTRACT

**Mental Health in Europe: the need for a common language, standard classification criteria and official communication.**

*Four studies about communication in Mental Health.*

**Supervisore:**

**Prof. Francesco Amaddeo**

*Dipartimento di Sanità Pubblica e Medicina di Comunità*

*Sezione di Psichiatria e Psicologia Clinica*

*Università degli Studi di Verona*

**Dottoranda:**

**Dott.ssa Ilaria Montagni**

*Dipartimento di Sanità Pubblica e Medicina di Comunità*

*Sezione di Psichiatria e Psicologia Clinica*

*Università degli Studi di Verona*

## **BACKGROUND**

Among the main objectives of the European Commission's current strategy "Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013" (resolution of 9 October 2008) there is the need to produce and distribute health knowledge. The basic process through which health knowledge is made available and reachable to professionals as well as to general public is "communication". Within the mental health research domain, the communication process involves both researchers and general audience (including peers, medical staff, policymakers, journalists and general public) and it is actually the main job of scientists today. Effective communication of mental health research can protect the public from being misled and from any form of stigmatization, overthrow previous misinformed beliefs, influence public policy and lead to further progress and clinical applications. This thesis invites to reflect upon the role of communication and its different facets in mental health research trying to answer the following question: which communication strategies should be adopted in mental health and for which challenges? Here we report 4 studies aimed at identifying the determinants of mental health information provision and seeking. Communication of the results of mental health research will be analyzed in line with the latest theories of transnational research in psychiatry.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this thesis is to analyze roles, actors, channels and messages of communication of mental health research through 4 studies derived from two major multi-center projects involving a total of 10 European countries: the REFINEMENT project (Italy, Austria, France, England, Spain, Norway, Finland, Estonia and Romania) and the e-MentH project (Italy, Ireland, France and Spain).

Communication is at the heart of psychiatry and it can be defined as an assessable and measurable phenomenon but with unclear significance especially when referring to mental health. These four studies provide some updated insights and clarifying examples on the current challenges of communicating mental health research results today.

## **METHODS AND RESULTS**

STUDY 1 is based on a mapping toolkit called REMAST which is aimed at standardizing the description of services through the geolocalization and the analysis of the spatial dimensions of primary, general health and social services used by people with mental disorders. The REMAST compared mental health services in 9 European countries. Through codes (DESDE-LTC), utilization data and comparative analyses, the description of these services provided a deeper insight on the actual organization and structure of European mental health care. STUDY 2 presents the REFINEMENT Glossary, a scientifically valid instrument to facilitate cross-country comparisons thanks to consensus definitions of mental health care terms. STUDY 3 and STUDY 4 describe two questionnaires on the characteristics of the internet surfers who used the web as a health information resource and help defining the context and the effect of such internet use on young adults' behavior in relation to their medical consultations. French users of the [www.filsantejeunes.com](http://www.filsantejeunes.com) website were interviewed in STUDY 3, whereas STUDY 4 compared the behaviors in the use of the internet for mental health among Italian, French, Irish and Spanish university students, thus focusing on the communication about mental health through new media.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This thesis underlines the need for implementing the communication between the actors of research in the domain of mental health, including very different figures ranging from patients to stakeholders. Through four studies which produced both qualitative and quantitative results, an overview of the different processes concerning communication of mental health research results has been provided. STUDY 1 and STUDY 2 showed the challenges and difficulties of communication between researchers and policymakers. The creation of a coding and mapping system and of a specific glossary for mental health services is necessary for informing financing parties and politicians of the current status of mental health care. Throughout these two studies policymakers can obtain a tool to assess systematically the use of alternative health care financing models in different contextual settings. STUDY 3 and STUDY 4 provided interesting insights on the use of the Internet as a tool for patients to acquire knowledge about mental health issues and for doctors to integrate their treatment and therapy strategies. All four studies showed that research means, today more than ever, sharing.