

# Transcultural psychiatry

## Definition of transcultural psychiatry

- Considered a part of social psychiatry
- It studies the influence of culture and social situations on the psychopathological symptomatology
- includes the so-called culture specific disorders
- includes also psychiatric problems of immigrants and foreign workers

## Culture specific disorders- Examples

- Mental disorders appearing in a geographical region (e.g. Malaysia, southeast asia...) that only appear there and are believed to occur due to cultural influence
- The ICD-10 classifies them as "culture specific disorders"

### Koro

- the fear that your penis/vulva is shrinking and going into your abdomen and that you can die of it. ICD-10: F48.8 "other neurotic syndromes"
- in southeast asian countries, India, China

### Dhat syndrome

- described in India
- an intensive fear of a loss of semen via masturbation, excess sexual intercourse, urinary disorders (a whitish urinary discharge interpreted as loss of semen), etc. Complaints about fatigue, loss of appetite, feelings of guilt.

### Amok

- ICD-10 recommends in contrast to the DSM-IV to classify it under F68.8 (personality and behavioral disorders)
- „A willing, seemingly unprovoked episode of murderous and destructive behavior that is followed with amnesia or fatigue. Many of these episodes end in suicide" (Appendix II, ICD-10)

## Other transcultural topics

### Gastarbeitersyndrom

- depressive syndromes in workers coming from abroad

### Cultural shock

## International pilot study of the WHO on schizophrenia

- was done in the 1960-70s
- the prevalence of schizophrenia was stable across cultures
- the types of symptoms people from different cultures had varied → in western countries they showed more depressive and anxiety symptoms (more isolation? stigma of schizophrenia?), thought insertion and thought broadcasting, while in non-western countries visual hallucinations were more frequent

## Mental illnesses in minorities living in western countries

- background: the **prevalence of schizophrenia** was the same in caribbean countries in comparison to the UK, yet african caribbean people experience schizophrenia at a higher degree if they live in the UK (immigrants) than their counterparts at home
- Why? → higher rate of socioeconomic disadvantage, racism?, stress?..

