

## Summary

**Background:** Little is known about the way multidisciplinary units perceive clinical supervision in psychiatric hospitals and about the effects of supervision. **Objective:** The main objective of this survey was to evaluate the experienced benefits and the 'side effects' of supervision. Another aim of the study was to investigate expected benefits and risks in supervision sessions analyzing comments of staff members. **Methods:** in a retrospective design staff members (e.g. nurses, doctors, counselors, psychologists) in psychiatric hospitals in Switzerland, Austria and Germany were asked about their experiences with supervision in the past six months prior interview. Comments were analyzed by a qualitative method. The sample was divided in two groups: staff members with case supervision (CS) or with team supervision (TS). A total sample of 1150 participants answered a semi-structured questionnaire. The response rate was 39,1%. **Results:** Overall 85% perceived supervision as helpful and 5.6% reported good and very good effects through supervision. However, 19.6% reported negative effects or critical incidents in at least one supervision session during the past six months. In general a high level of personal performance and competence of supervisors was reported. Case supervision was perceived as more helpful than team supervision. Qualitative analyses showed three major factors of supervision quality items: 'burnout prevention', 'problem or conflict solving', and 'improvement of communication between staff members'. The most important factor was the perceived burnout prophylactic effect of supervision in both settings (CS and TS). **Conclusions:** The present study is the largest survey conducted in Europe. The major part of multidisciplinary units perceive supervision (CS and TS) as helpful and effective. However, case supervision (CS) seems to be perceived as more helpful in psychiatric hospitals than team supervision (TS). Furthermore, supervision seems to have a high 'burnout prevention' effect. Supervision in psychiatry is a very powerful instrument to recognize burnout phenomena and prevent them. It also helps staff and patients to create better therapeutic relations, dignity, respect and show courtesy between them. Finally, an academic formation as a psychologist, doctor or in pedagogy, combined with a supervisor formation and a formation in psychotherapy seems to be the best condition for high quality standards in supervision.