


Chapter 8

Applying Family Constellations in Healthcare: Ethical Challenges and Best Practices

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ABSTRACT

Family Constellations is a therapeutic approach used to reveal and resolve family dynamics that may influence individual health. This chapter explores its application within healthcare, examining both its potential benefits and the ethical challenges it presents. Specifically, it focuses on issues related to patient consent, privacy, the role of cultural sensitivity, and the need for professional boundaries in clinical practice. Drawing on case studies and evidence-based practice, the chapter outlines best practices for incorporating Family Constellations responsibly and effectively into patient care. Strategies for practitioner training, safeguarding vulnerable populations, and aligning therapeutic goals with patient-centred care are discussed. The chapter concludes by proposing guidelines for ethical implementation, emphasising collaborative care models and continued professional reflection.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Family Constellations, a therapeutic approach developed by Bert Hellinger in the 1990s, has gained significant traction in various therapeutic and healthcare settings. This method is predicated on the belief that individuals are often influenced by the dynamics and unresolved issues within their family systems, which can manifest as emotional and psychological distress (Stiefel et al., 2002; Cohen, 2006). The therapeutic process involves a group setting where participants represent family members, allowing for the visualisation and exploration of familial relationships and dynamics. This experiential approach aims to uncover hidden patterns and entanglements that may contribute to an individual's current struggles, thereby facilitating healing and resolution (Stiefel et al., 2002; Cohen, 2006; Thege et al., 2021).

1.1 Overview of Family Constellations as a Therapeutic Approach

Historically, the roots of Family Constellations can be traced back to systemic family therapy and phenomenological approaches, integrating elements from various psychological and philosophical traditions. The method emphasises the importance of acknowledging and addressing the roles of ancestors and familial legacies, which can profoundly impact individual behaviour and mental health (Stiefel et al., 2002; Cohen, 2006). As the practice evolved, it began to incorporate insights from various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and anthropology, thereby enriching its theoretical underpinnings and practical applications (Mayer & Viviers, 2015; Hurley et al., 2018; Gyimesi, 2022). In contemporary healthcare settings, Family Constellations have been utilised to address a range of issues, including trauma, grief, and chronic illness, highlighting its versatility as a therapeutic tool (Thege et al., 2021; Weinhold et al., 2013; Welford, 2014).

The relevance of Family Constellations in modern healthcare cannot be overstated. With the increasing recognition of the biopsychosocial model of health, which posits that biological, psychological, and social factors are interconnected, Family Constellations offer a unique lens through which to view patient care. This approach aligns with the growing emphasis on holistic and patient-centred care, where understanding the patient's family dynamics is crucial for effective treatment (Lombana, 2021; Thege et al., 2021; Schneider et al., 2023). Moreover, the integration of Family Constellations into healthcare practices raises important ethical considerations, particularly concerning patient consent, privacy, and cultural sensitivity. As healthcare providers navigate these complexities, it becomes imperative to establish best practices that ensure the responsible and ethical application of this therapeutic

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