

An Exploratory Case Study of the Interference of Erotic Transference in the Longevity of Psychoanalytic Treatment

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Abstract : In this exploratory case study, a 37-year-old male patient who previously terminated treatment after four months of therapy with a different therapist begins anew with a 38-year-old female therapist and undergoes a similar cycle of premature termination, with added discourse caused by erotic transference. Process notes and records of the therapy treatment indicate that during the short course of treatment, the patient explored his difficulties navigating personal relationships, both current and past, and his difficulties coping with hypochondriasis. The therapist becomes tasked with not only navigating the patient's inner conflict but also how she relates to the patient in the countertransference process while maintaining professional boundaries. This includes empathizing with the patient while also experiencing discomfort in the erotic transference from a professional standpoint. When the patient terminates once more, the therapist reflects on the possible reasons for termination. This includes the patient's difficulties with tolerating interpretations, which cause him to blame himself for past events. These interpretations were also very frequent, contributing to the emotional burden the patient experienced. The therapist reflected on the use of interpretation versus exploration of the patient's feelings and how exploring his feelings, including his feelings towards her, would have allowed for an opportunity to explore the emotions that troubled him more deeply. This includes exploring the patient's anger and fear, which stem from unresolved conflicts from his childhood. Moreover, the erotic transference served as an enactment of previous experiences in which the patient feared losing what he loved, leading him to opt for premature termination instead of losing his ability to control the relationship and experience loss.

Keywords : countertransference, erotic transference, premature termination, therapist-client boundaries, transference

Conference Title : ICPEP 2024 : International Conference on Psychoanalysis and Educational Psychology

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : January 29-30, 2024