

Obituary Nossrat Peseschkian

The brilliant Iranian medical doctor, laureate of the German Federal Cross of Merit, and Nobel Prize candidate, Professor Nossrat Peseschkian, M.D., passed away on April 27, 2010.

Nossrat Peseschkian was born on June 18, 1933, in Kashan, Iran. In 1968, he founded the Wiesbaden Advanced Education Ring for Psychotherapy and then the Wiesbaden Academy for Psychotherapy (WIAP), an officially recognized training centre for psychotherapy with 45 assistant professors. In 1978, he set up the Society for Positive Psychotherapy and the International Academy for Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy. The Professor Peseschkian Foundation (www.peseschkian-stiftung.de) was established in 2005.



Nossrat Peseschkian was the author of 25 books in the field of Positive Psychotherapy, which were partly translated into 23 different languages having a total circulation of almost 500'000 copies. Approximately 260 scientific articles have been published in medical journals.

Nossrat Peseschkian was a member of the Council of the International Federation of Psychotherapy IFP. He supported the IFP actively as an internationally recognized lecturer of IFP-sponsored workshops, thus promoting the dissemination of evidence-based psychotherapeutic approaches. The World Association for Positive Psychotherapy (WAPP), the international umbrella organization of Positive Psychotherapy, is a member organization of the IFP.

Here are some of his numerous awards and honors:

- 1997 Richard Mertens Prize for his work "Computer Assisted Quality Assurance in Positive Psychotherapy"
- 1998 Federal Medical Chamber of Germany awarded Ernst von Bergmann Plaque for Services in Continuing Medical Education for Physicians in Germany

- 2006 Order of Merit, Distinguished Service Cross of the Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesverdienstkreuz), "the highest recognition of the Federal Republic of Germany for those citizens who have acquired distinguished services and achievements in social-economical, political and spiritual fields as well as their particular services for the Republic for example social charity and humanitarian aid."
- 2006 International Avicenna Award of Excellence in Teaching and Research in Medical Sciences by Association of Iranian Physicians and Dentists in Germany
- 2006 honouree of the Encyclopaedia Iranica at the Geneva Avicenna Gala, which honoured outstanding physicians who have made notable contributions to the advancement of the medical field. Encyclopaedia Iranica is a branch of Columbia University in New York, United States.

Further information about Professor Peseschkian is available at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nossrat_Peseschkian

and

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positive_Psychotherapy.

On behalf of the International Federation for Psychotherapy, its Board and Council, I would like to offer Nossrat Peseschkian's wife and extended family our sincere condolences. His positive, deeply human spirit will be with us in the future!

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Prof. Dr. med. Nossrat Peseschkian, 18.6.1933 – 27.4.2010

The Founder of Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy

Prof. Nossrat Peseschkian was born in Iran and moved to Germany in 1954. After his medical studies he specialized in neurology, psychiatry, psychotherapy and psychosomatic medicine. He went into analysis with Prof. Heinrich Meng in Basel / Switzerland, a coworker of Sigmund Freud and the founder of social and mental hygiene. Thanks to him he went highly interested in the salutogenic approach.

Since 1968 he was practicing in Wiesbaden/Germany where he founded the model of Positive Psychotherapy which is based on a transcultural approach. The development of this concept involved the investigation of the relationship between culture and disease and of the cultural concepts in 22 different cultural groups.

As international lecturer Prof. Peseschkian gave speeches at universities and colleagues in more than 60 countries. He was honorary professor at the National Psychoneurologic Institute Bechterew in Saint Petersburg / Russia.

Prof. Peseschkian was the author of numerous books on psychotherapy and selfeducation . 26 books on Positive Psychotherapy have been partly published in 24 languages, and have been among the first ones in Eastern Europe. The books have been translated in Chinese, Russian, English and Spanish. 260 articles have been published in scientific magazines.

He was also the founder and former director of the Wiesbaden Academy for Psychotherapy (**WIAP**; for the state-recognized postgraduate teaching; one of the TOP 10 training institute in Germany – out of 178; www.wiap.de), the director of the International Academy of Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy / Peseschkian Foundation (www.peseschkian-stiftung.de) – and finally the founder and director of the World Association of Positive Psychotherapy (**WAPP**, www.positum.org), the head office with many centers all over the world.

Prof. Peseschkian supported the **International Federation of Psychotherapy IFP** actively as an internationally recognized lecturer of IFP-sponsored work-

shops, thus promoting the dissemination of evidence-based psychotherapeutic approaches. The World Association for Positive Psychotherapy (WAPP), the international umbrella organization of Positive Psychotherapy, is member of the IFP.

The positive human picture, the positive approach:

To the two basic questions (what do all people have in common? and how are they differentiated?) Prof. Peseschkian answered as follows: “For instance, just as a seed possesses a multitude of capacities which are unfolded through the influence of the environment, for example the earth, rain, the gardener, etc. In such a way, a human being also develops his capacities in close relation with his environment. Underlying the concept of positive psychotherapy and family therapy is the conception that every person has two basic capacities, i.e. the capacity to know (knowledge) and the capacity to love (emotionally). According to the condition of the body, the environment and the time in which a person lives, certain basic capacities are developed and lead to an unmistakable structure of characteristics.”

The model of Positive Psychotherapy is a synthesis of psychodynamics and behaviour therapy that focuses on the positive aspects of conflicts and sufferings. It offers transcultural perspectives in the form of proverbs, myths and fables in which the patient may recognize himself in allegorical terms and thus be able to establish a new form of self-confidence and security.

In a metaphor Prof. Peseschkian explained **the positive process** with the following situation: “A man discovered that he was in debt. This realization made it impossible for him to get any sleep. He became very depressed and wanted to commit suicide. He complained about it to a good friend.

The friend listened patiently as the man told of all his problems but when he replied he made no mention of the debts. This surprised the man very much. Instead of discussing the debts the friend talked about what the man owned, about his money, and about the friends who were ready to help him.

Suddenly the disturbed man saw his problems in a new light. When he stopped wasting his energy on problems and debts and concentrated on the abilities he actually had, he discovered he had enough power and resources to solve his problem."

Prof. Gaetano Benedetti, Basel / Switzerland, explained in 1979: "His model is a notable synthesis of psychodynamic and behavior-therapeutic elements, making an essential contribution to unified relationship within psychotherapy".

In 1997 he was awarded the Richard Merten Prize for his work "Computer Assisted Quality Assurance in Positive Psychotherapy". This Prize is one of the highest awards of quality assurance in the medical field in Europe.

In 2006 Prof. Peseschkian received the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesverdienstkreuz).

Throughout his life he manifested a high disposition to be useful and helpful to others – and to teach younger colleagues. „**Those who do not help others need doctors to help them**” (oriental wisdom) he used to say.

Together with Prof. Raymond Battagay, Basel/Switzerland, he wrote a book with the 50 answers to the important questions about life. With his transcultural and humanistic background and as a member of the Bahá'ís he deeply believed in the beneficial effect of religion. In his book "**Believe in God – and tie your camel**"³ (in German, 2008) he explained the important distinction of faith, religion and institution.

**"Intelligence without love is cold,
love without intelligence is naive,
intelligence with love is wisdom."**

Prof. Peseschkian died on the morning of April 27, 2010. The day before he still worked in his office preparing a lot of projects. But he was well prepared to his death and therefore even in his passing away he set an example to all of us.

His work shall be continued and the spirit of his heritage shall be carried on. The upcoming 5th World Congress of Positive Psychotherapy in Istanbul (www.positum2010.org, 9-12 October 2010) will surely be a very special event. It will be the chance to appreciate the heritage of Prof. Peseschkian to the world of psychotherapy. And the discussion - with

participants from more than 20 countries - about the further development of the World Association will go on – "**it's all in your hand**".

It's in your hands In the East there lived a wise man. He was loved throughout the land, and whenever people had problems they would seek counsel with him. This was because the wise old man was always able to dig into his rich life experience and find some good advice to give. However, that made some of his fellow citizens, who held themselves to be clever and wise, jealous. They agreed to set a trap for the old man. But how?

After pondering the matter for a long time, they came up with the following idea. They would capture a tiny bird, hold it out to the old man in a closed fist and ask him what was in the hand. Even if, as expected, the old man responded correctly, he would certainly err in his response to the second question, to wit, whether the bird was dead, the person could open his hand and let the bird fly away.

Thus prepared, the person went to the old man and posed the question. After thinking it over, the old man answered the first question: "What you have in your hand can be none other than a very small bird."

"OK," said the jealous man, "you may be right about that, but is it alive or dead?" The old man weighed the matter, shook his head several times and said, "**Whether what you are holding in your hand is alive or dead is in your own hands.**"

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¹One should be aware that the term „phenomenology“ is nowa Positive Psychotherapy: Theory and Practice of a new Method (Springer Publisher 1987)

² Psychotherapy of Everyday Life: Training in Partnership and Self Help (Sterling New Delhi, 1996)

³ this is a story in: Oriental Stories as Tools in Psychotherapy; The Merchant and the Parrot, page 47 (Sterling New Delhi, 1982)

⁴Life is a Paradise: To Which We Can Find the Key, page 19 (New Dawn Press 2006)