

Self management program

The patient organisation „Reumabond“ of the Netherlands has been running a self management program for about ten years. It is the program of Kate Lorig from USA, developed in the seventies. Deutsche Rheuma-Liga wants to introduce this program in Germany. EULAR kindly supported an educational visit between the leagues of the Netherlands und Germany.

Unfortunately, in the beginning it took quite long to establish the first contact. There was a change in the management in the Netherlands and André de Vos – the responsible person for the self management program – was ill. In July 2011 Karl Cattelaens from the German Rheuma-Liga went to Amersfort and was heartily welcomed by Bertha Maat and Hans Sureveen. In about 3 hours an intensive exchange of experiences between the neighbouring organisations took place. The Reumabond provided a lot of information and material for the German organisation. Many important papers had already been translated into German. The German Organisation was given the manual for teaching a self management course, including 80 pages. Bertha Maat and Hans Sureveen spoke about the development of the program in the Netherlands. They reported about their experiences with the education of trainers, with advertising for patients for the courses, how to finance the courses, how to receive the copyright of the program and the course book.

It was arranged that a pilot course should be taking place in Germany in the autumn of the year 2011. German patients and staff of the German Rheuma-Liga would have the possibility of gaining experience with the program. Bertha Maat and Marleen Bolech – trainers from the Netherlands and speaking German – would come to Germany and teach the course.

During the following months the information provided by the Rheumabond was discussed within Deutsche Rheuma-Liga. The Länder organisation of Nordrhein-Westfalen stated their interest in starting with the program. A project group of patients and managers of the Länder organisations of “Deutsche Rheuma-Liga” was installed. Karl Cattelaens started to translate the manual of the self management course into German. Each chapter was counter-checked by Bertha Maat from the “Reumabond”. Finally the translation was completed and Bertha Maat and Marleen Bolech had a basis for teaching the course in Germany.

From Friday the 25th of November to Sunday the 27th the self management course was held in Gelsenkirchen. 8 persons with arthritis, 2 Managers of the Rheuma-Liga and the 2 trainers from the Netherlands met in a hotel for one full and two half days. Bertha Maat und Marleen Bolech taught all six modules of the course – taking about 2.5 hours each. Between the modules a brake of at least 2 hours was taken. To hold the course in this way was very exhausting for the trainers and the participants. Most courses in the Netherlands are held within 6 weeks, one chapter each week.

At the end of the course, all participants gave a feed back about the course in form of a written evaluation. All of them gave a very positive feedback about the course and the two trainers from the Netherlands. The language barrier was no problem as Bertha Maat und Marleen Bolech both speak very good German and had no problem teaching the course. The experience of the trainers with having a rheumatic condition is a very important qualification to teach this course.

The participants discussed the future of such courses in Germany and agreed to implement the self management program in the German league of people with arthritis and rheumatism. The composition of important subjects, the different methods used in the course, the exchange of experiences in the group, the inclusion of movement, exercise and communication are all quite effective to help the participants to develop a new attitude towards the life with a rheumatic condition.

Deutsche Rheuma-Liga is planning to implement the self management course in the Länder organisations. The course book for the participants now has to be translated. The project group has to work through all modules of the course in order to adapt everything to the situation in Germany. Trainers have to be selected and educated to be able to teach the program. The courses have to be advertised and a German name for the course has to be found.

We are very grateful to EULAR for the grant which allowed us to introduce this course in Germany and we would like to give special thanks to Bertha Maat, Marleen Bolech, André de Vos and Hans Surveen for supporting us in introducing the self-management course of Kate Lorig in Germany.

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