

## THE MEANING OF THERAPEUTIC LEAKS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY: WHY THERAPISTS GOSSIP *by Lonnie Prince*

This qualitative study explored how therapists experience, describe and think about the experience of casual anecdotal leaks, referring to the phenomenon of discussing patients outside of formal consultation. The following questions were addressed: What were the specific contexts in which this occurred? What feelings came up in the aftermath of them? Were there particular types of patients who evoked this behavior? Did the therapist feel therapeutic leaks helped and or hindered the work and if so, how?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine participants, all of whom had been in practice for at least fifteen years. Content from the interviews was analyzed according to Glaser and Strauss' method of constant comparison.

Results indicated that all participants engaged in discussion of patients regardless of how strictly they felt they adhered to the principle of confidentiality. The participants expressed some discomfort at talking about their own experience, but none felt that harm was done to the patient. The context of the leaks seemed as important, if not more so, than the leaks themselves. The findings of this study indicate that casual anecdotal breaches are a way of re-establishing the emotional equilibrium for the therapist when strong counter-transference feelings arise.