

## Research in Graubünden

### Insight into the HARMODI project

Study on the optimization of burnout treatment



*Physical activity in nature is an important part of therapy at the Clinica Holistica Engiadina.*

*Photo credit: Clinica Holistica Engiadina*

The prospect of an exciting research project on burnout brought sports scientist Wiebke Turner from her home in northern Germany to the Clinica Holistica Engiadina in the Lower Engadine village of Susch in 2022. Turner is very happy that the specialized burnout clinic is supporting the research project named HARMODI in cooperation with the Department of Sport, Exercise and Health at the University of Basel. The aim of the project is to optimize the treatment of burnout.

The doctoral student wants to find out whether heart rate variability (HRV) is suitable for measuring the severity of depression and exhaustion. Turner explains: “HRV is a recognized stress indicator that measures changes in the time interval between heartbeats. If the interval between heartbeats is sometimes shorter or sometimes longer, this shows that our body can adapt well to different living conditions. If the heart rate variability is restricted, this is an indication that the body is experiencing a lot of stress.”

Another focus of the study is to investigate how the HRV, exhaustion, and fitness levels of the patients change during the 6 to 8 weeks of inpatient therapy. Turner explains: “It would be nice to see that exhaustion improves from the beginning to the end of the therapy. But it could also be that stress levels rise again at the end of therapy because you are facing the challenges at home. There may also be a trend for exhaustion to be low in some weeks of therapy and high in others. In that case, we would adapt the therapy program in the future.”

Particular attention is paid to the question of whether study participants who exercise more during therapy are better able to reduce their exhaustion than study participants who exercise less. To collect the data, the study participants use an app on their cell phone to assess their fatigue and mood on a daily basis. At the same time, they wear an accelerometer on their wrist, which records their activity or inactivity. Turner emphasizes: “Physical activity has a proven positive effect on mood and exhaustion levels. However, we

have yet to determine whether our patients adhere to the recommended physical activity guidelines during their stay.”

The research project HARMODI is still ongoing. To obtain reliable data, Turner requires 153 inpatients who voluntarily participate in the observational study. She hopes to recruit the remaining 30 study participants by July 2024 so that she can then start analyzing the data. The results are scheduled for publication in 2025.

For those who notice signs of burnout, Turner recommends creating structure in everyday life, finding a healthy balance between stress and relaxation, engaging in regular physical activity, and reflecting on personal priorities.

Wiebke Turner and Daniela Heinen

### About the Clinica Holistica Engiadina

The Clinica Holistica Engiadina SA (CHE) in Susch, Graubünden, is the first specialized clinic in Switzerland dedicated to stress-related disorders and burnout. The clinic's services focus on holistic diagnosis and treatment of stress-related conditions.

You can find more information about the clinic at [www.clinica-holistica.ch](http://www.clinica-holistica.ch).



*Wiebke Turner*

*Image credit: Clinica Holistica Engiadina*

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