Violent behaviour: aetiology and treatment issues
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Preface

In The Netherlands, criminal offenders, who are found to be not or less responsible for their serious offences, due to their mental state, may be sentenced to involuntary admittance to a forensic psychiatric hospital by the court. This order is called the Ter Beschikking Stelling van de Staat (TBS) and is practiced since 1928, when it first was called the Ter Beschikking Stelling van de Regering (TBR). Relatively few studies have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of TBS treatment. Recidivism rates of ex-TBS patients are available and show that roughly twenty percent of the offenders commit a serious crime within a few years after they were discharged from the hospital. However, recidivism rates alone do not provide information on what works for which patients in treatment and what does not.

Nowadays, there are 10 TBS clinics, about 1300 TBS patients and more than 150 offenders waiting to be admitted to a hospital according to data of 2003 (Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen, 2004). A lot of money is involved in treating these offenders and studies that do give insight into the effective elements of treatment are necessary.

But also from the point of view of the TBS offender it may be considered unethical to enforce years of treatment or to withhold treatment, when no efforts are made to prove the effectiveness of treatment at a scientific level.

In the early nineties of the prior century the Ministry of Justice strongly encouraged the TBS clinics, that were financed by the state, to implement scientific research. In those days, only a few TBS clinics did research and only by occasion a common research project in which two or more clinics participated was started. There was however not a coordinating scientific committee or centre from which research projects were initiated and coordinated. In this climate a research project in FPC Veldzicht was started in 1994 in cooperation with the department of Clinical Psychology of the University of Groningen. The present thesis is the result of this cooperation and addresses several topics of the aetiology and treatment of violent offenders that were considered important.

The efforts that were made to implement a controlled study to measure the effectiveness of treatment showed that research can not be instantly enforced on a clinic without a history of research. It takes a revolution or a long-term process to manage this and should be actively supported by delegates of all levels within the organisation, including ministry, management, treatment and research.