Abstract:
Development of 'Ordnungstherapie', due to Bircher-Benner in the Naturopathy of the 20th Century

Background: The German term 'Ordnungstherapie' is one of the five therapeutics which defines naturopathy in German-speaking countries. Objective: Who formed the term Ordnungstherapie in naturopathy and what does it mean?

Material and Methods: Heuristics and criticism of literature of the 20th century as well as database research.

Results: Nowadays in German-language medical books Ordnungstherapie belongs to the five therapeutics which define European naturopathy. Yet, the interpretation ranges from health education to body-orientated forms of psychotherapy. The term Ordnungstherapie is often related with the German priest and hydropath Sebastian Kneipp, however, term and definition have been founded by the Swiss physician Maximillian Bircher-Benner. In 1937 he defined Ordnungstherapie as a complex concept of natural healing. It is based upon the rather nosological idea that health is order/harmony in the human body (physically, psychologically), the environment and the daily course. Illness occurs if disorder appears in one of these fields. The therapeutic setting of Ordnungstherapie is defined by 9 rules of conduct to maintain order, which include nutrition, the skin as an organ (exposure to light, air, water), breathing, movement, rhythm of life, and psyche. For all these aspects Bircher-Benner himself uses the terms somatotherapy (dietotherapy, sun and light therapy, hydrotherapy, exercise therapy,
breathing technique, order of the rhythm of live) and psychotherapy. He chose these complementary methods subjectively after learning them from 1897 onwards in an eclectic manner and after gaining therapeutic empiricism. Nevertheless his ideas of the Ordnungstherapie correlate with the socio-political context of the 1940ies. Conclusions: The term Ordnungstherapie was introduced by Bircher-Benner as an umbrella term in 1937 to describe a complex concept of naturopathic therapies. It comprises, with certain limitations for phytotherapy, the therapies which nowadays define European naturopathy. Yet, in European naturopathy today Ordnungstherapie is mostly considered as one out of 5 constituents of naturopathy (dietotherapy, hydrotherapy, exercise therapy, phytotherapy, Ordnungstherapie). The classification of Ordnungstherapie as one of the 5 pillars of the Kneipp therapy was only done by Kneipp physicians in the middle of the 20th century and needs to be thought over.