

THE DUTCH MENTAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEM MADE ME FEEL LIKE

Alice in Wonderland

Half a year ago, you and your family came to the Netherlands for a new job; a new challenge, with new opportunities. Or: you have been living in the Netherlands for a few years now, but you grew up in another country, with a different culture and language. At first, you thought all it required was some getting used to, but you have yet to make a real connection with the locals.

You still feel a little bit alone, and at times even sad and depressed. You are having a hard time crawling out of this valley – and realize that perhaps you should seek professional help. But how do you go about doing this and where do you find it? Will it be covered by your insurance plan? How does the Dutch medical system work?

These are a few of the questions you might have if you are living and working in the Netherlands as an expat and at some point in time require specific care. It turns out these issues are harder to tackle in another country than back home. You go onto the Internet to look for answers to your questions, but it soon becomes clear: the Dutch medical system is a maze. And you feel like Alice in Wonderland.

If you have psychological issues, you can be helped. But how? If you live and work in the Netherlands, you are required to arrange health insurance. In most cases, you will be doing this with a Dutch health insurance provider. Once you have arranged this, you will first have to find yourself a GP (*huisarts*). Any health-related questions will first have to be put before him – at least, if you want your insurance to cover the related costs. Based on your problem, your GP will determine whether or not you require specialist care and if so, which specialist or institution to refer you to.

Say, you are feeling depressed and would



‘Where do you go for help if you don’t speak the language?’

like to talk to a psychologist. Where can you go? Can you pay per session if the treatment is covered by the insurance company? And how are the treatment costs calculated?

In the Netherlands, psychological care is covered by your health insurance, provided you have been referred by your GP. Once

you have your referral, you can go to one of the many GGZ institutions for an intake interview and treatment, if required.

In this country, they make use of the DBC System (Diagnose Behandel Combinatie, or Diagnosis Treatment Combination) to catalog the care provided and to determine the related costs. It involves a minute-by-minute registration of the care that is given to the patient. Only once the diagnosis-specific treatment has been completed, can they determine how much it has cost. Meaning that you cannot pay per session.

Almost anywhere in the Netherlands, you will be able to find psychological help – however, this is often in Dutch and oriented towards Dutch patients. Where do you go for help if you don’t speak the language? Or if you would like to find someone who can take into account your background and culture-specific traits?

There are a few specialized medical institutions, particularly in the Hague and Amsterdam regions, that focus on expats. One excellent example of this is PsyQ International. It offers a wide range of knowledge and specialist psychological help in a variety of languages. Its professionals are either expats themselves or have expat experience. Making them, hopefully, even more adept at empathizing with you and the issues you are dealing with. ❧

Do you have any questions? Or are you looking for help for certain psychological issues? Visit: www.psyq.nl/expatriates/expats for more information.