

Brief History of Group Psychotherapy Congresses at Bergama Asclepion***Bergama Asclepion Grup Psikoterapisi Kongrelerinin Kısa Tarihçesi****Hayriye Dilek Akdoğanⁱ, Osman İsmail Özdelⁱⁱ, Ilgaz Akdoğanⁱⁱⁱ**ⁱAssistant Prof., Dept. of Medical Education, Bakırçay University Faculty of Medicine
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Dear Editor;

In Asclepieia, the hospitals of ancient times built in the name of Asclepios, the God of Medicine and Health in mythology, which were hospitals of the ancient era, treatment methods that were quite advanced compared to their time and guide us today were applied. Asclepion of Pergamon is one of the places where the first psychiatric approach to patients and group psychotherapy practices were made in the history of medicine. In Asclepion of Pergamon, social, emotional and psychological treatments were also applied in addition to physical treatment.¹⁻³ This Letter to Editor was written to present a concrete example of the living historical heritage of the Asclepion of Pergamon and to introduce this historical perspective to younger generations; History of Bergama Asclepion International Group Psychotherapy Congresses.

The International Group Psychotherapy Congress held at Bergama Asclepion has a unique historical and symbolic significance in the field of mental health.⁴ The Asclepion of Pergamon (today Bergama in Türkiye) was an ancient healing center, dedicated to Asclepius, the God of health and medicine in mythology, where holistic therapies, including dream therapy, music therapy, and group discussions, were practiced. These ancient healing traditions are considered early forms of psychotherapy, making the Asclepion a fitting location for modern psychotherapy gatherings (**Figures 1-4**).

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Figure 1. Group Psychotherapy Congress poster of 2018 in Bergama Asclepion.

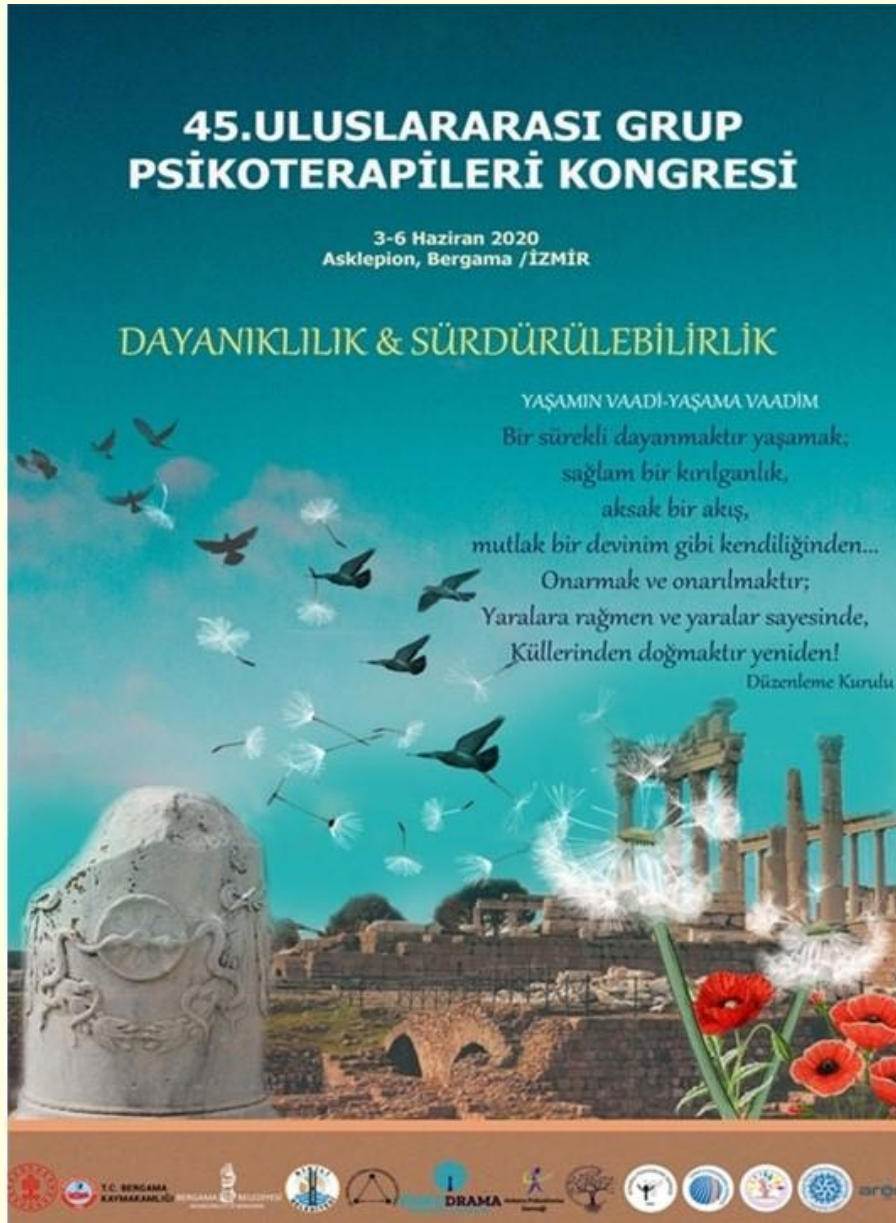


Figure 2. Group Psychotherapy Congress poster of 2020 in Bergama Asclepion.



Figure 3. Images from the Group Psychotherapy Congresses (in Bergama Asclepion) (<https://bergama.bel.tr/kultur-sanat/uluslararasi-grup-psikoterapileri-kongresi/>).



Figure 4. Images from the Group Psychotherapy Congresses (in Bergama Asclepion) (<https://bergama.meb.gov.tr/www/uluslararasi-katilimli-46-grup-psikoterapileri-kongresi/icerik/1004>).

The idea who has Professor Abdulkadir Ozbek (1924-2005) and Dr. Grete Leutz (1930-2025) of organizing an International Group Psychotherapy Congress at Bergama Asclepion emerged in 1984, inspired by the site's historical connection to mental healing. Since its inception, the congress has been held annually or biennially, bringing together psychotherapists, researchers, and mental health professionals from around the world.

As time progressed, the congress has evolved to include various psychotherapy approaches, such as:

- Group analysis and psychodrama
- Family and systemic
- Trauma-focused therapy
- Neuroscientific and cross-cultural perspectives in psychotherapy.

The congress serves as a platform for scientific discussions, practical workshops, and interdisciplinary collaborations, contributing to the global development of group psychotherapy. Today, it continues to grow, honoring the ancient healing legacy of Asclepion while advancing modern therapeutic practices.

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Author Contributions

Hayriye Dilek Akdoğan: Concept, design, data collection, supervision, analyses and interpretation, literature search, writing-review, editing.

Osman İsmail Özdel: Concept, data collection, supervision, analyses and interpretation, literature search, writing-review, editing.

İlgaz Akdoğan: Concept, design, data collection, analyses and interpretation, literature search, writing-review, editing.

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