

Marieke Wichers

The dynamic nature of psychopathology and the relevance of micro-level context

Introduction: Psychopathology may be the result of a dynamic interplay between mental states and daily life contexts. It has been shown that small moment-to-moment changes in mental states can be very informative for the later development of symptoms. Also, the speed of recovery following minor stressors is hypothesized to be a measure of resilience against psychopathology.

Methods: Experience sampling is a methodology that is optimally suited to follow the dynamics of mental states over time in relation to the daily life context in which these dynamics occur. It allows for prospective assessments to examine how mental states follow on each other and how mental states respond to daily life contexts such as stressors. Network and time-series techniques can be used for analyzing these dynamics

Results: I will present results regarding the dynamics of mental states combined with contextual factors in populations at high risk for psychopathology and with current psychopathology. Furthermore, I will explain the relevance of personalized models and a new approach in which we aim to expose early warning signals for psychopathology in micro-level daily life measures combined with sensor technology.

Conclusions: Psychopathology is dynamic in nature and therefore we should use designs and measurements that can capture that dynamic development. Measurements of mental states and daily life contexts at the micro-level may reveal relevant dynamic patterns that may provide insight in the development of psychopathology.

Key words: experience sampling; networks; daily life context; personalized medicine