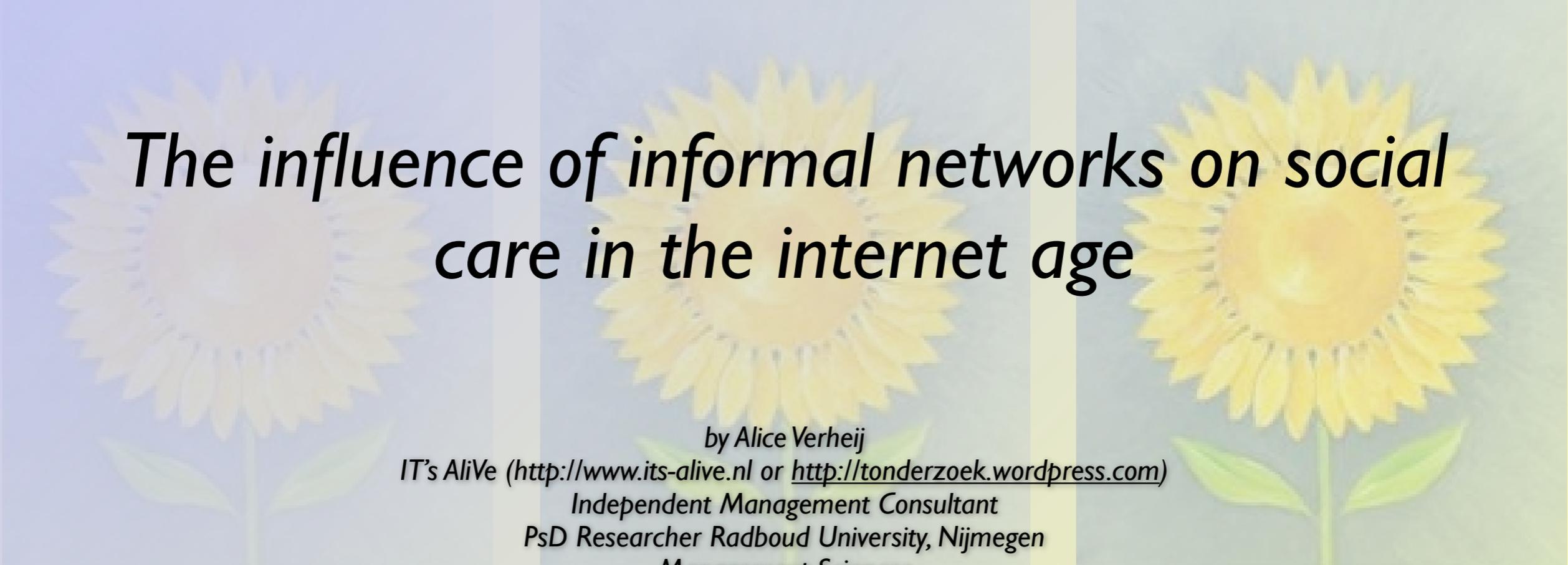


*Re-thinking network theory*



# *The influence of informal networks on social care in the internet age*

*by Alice Verheij*

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Management Sciences*

*for the 2007 ASCA Conference  
June 29<sup>th</sup>, Amsterdam*

# Research topic

- *My PhD research programme concerns: 'completeness and accessibility of care for people concerned with genderdysphoria'. (more popular: transgender and transsexual care.)*
- *Transsexuals manage multiple networks. Many of those networks they do not have any previous experience with.*
- *An important role in gender transition is played by peer networks like internet communities for knowledge sharing and mental support.*
- ***No research is available** on if and how these peer networks influence the real life networks these people live in.*
- *Case stories show influence of peer networks on major transition questions like:*
  - *changing and managing social networks*
  - *selecting medical treatment and doctors*
  - *strengthening of social position and self esteem*

# Networks involved: overview

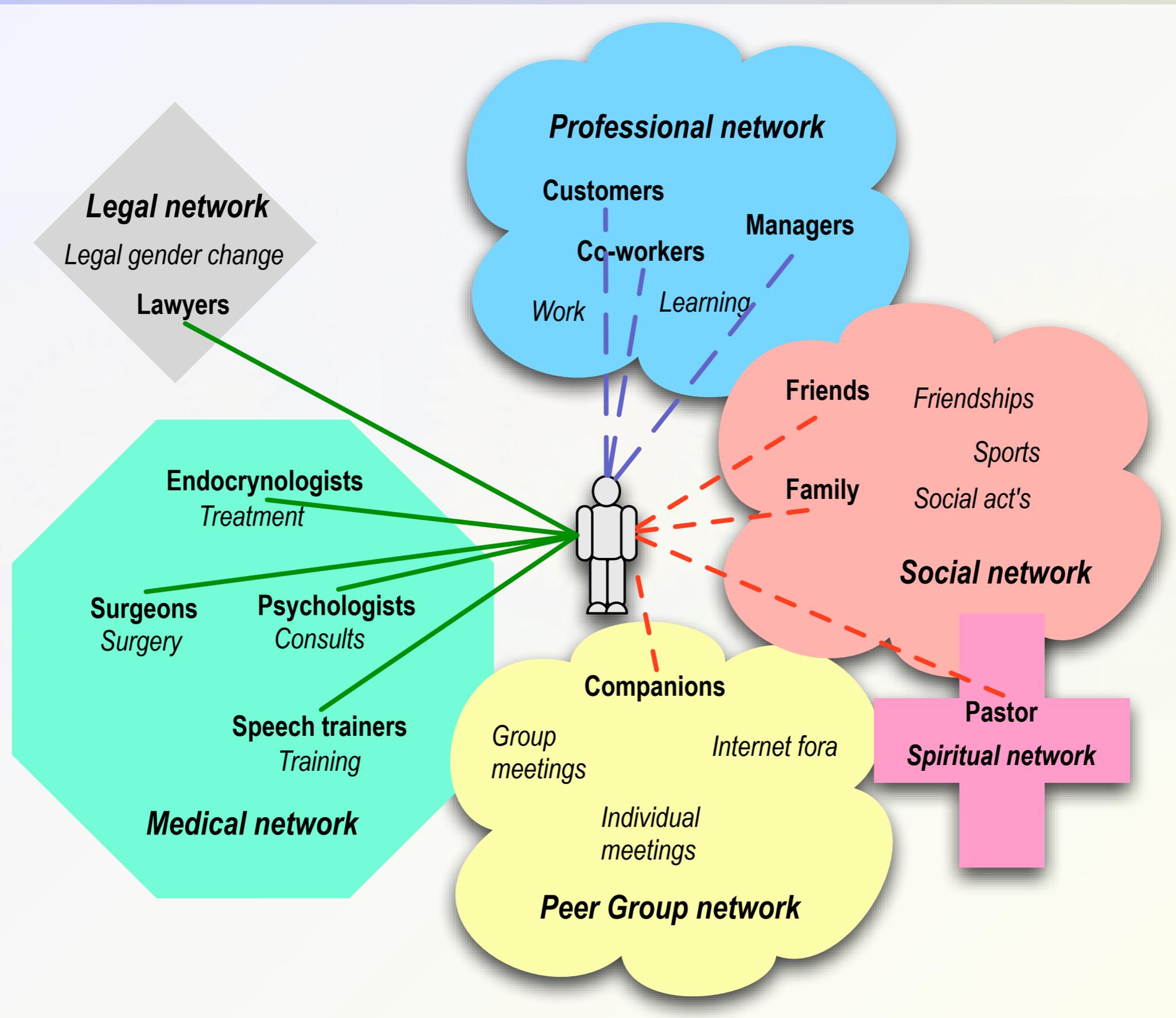
- *The following networks are involved from a 'patient' perspective:*
  - *social networks of the patient*
    - *family*
    - *friends*
    - *sports and other social networks*
  - *professional network of the patient*
  - *medical networks*
    - *medical care: doctors (endocrinologists, surgeons, general physicians, voice trainers)*
    - *psycho-social care (psychologists, psychiatrists)*
    - *social care: social workers including voluntary aid workers*
  - *peer group networks*
    - *self aid groups*
    - *online communities*
  - *legal network*
    - *court of law*
    - *local community*
  - *spiritual and religious networks*
    - *church and other spiritual or religious communities*

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The average network of a transsexual during his / her transition influencing daily life probably **doubles**. Still most of them feel left alone for most of the process.

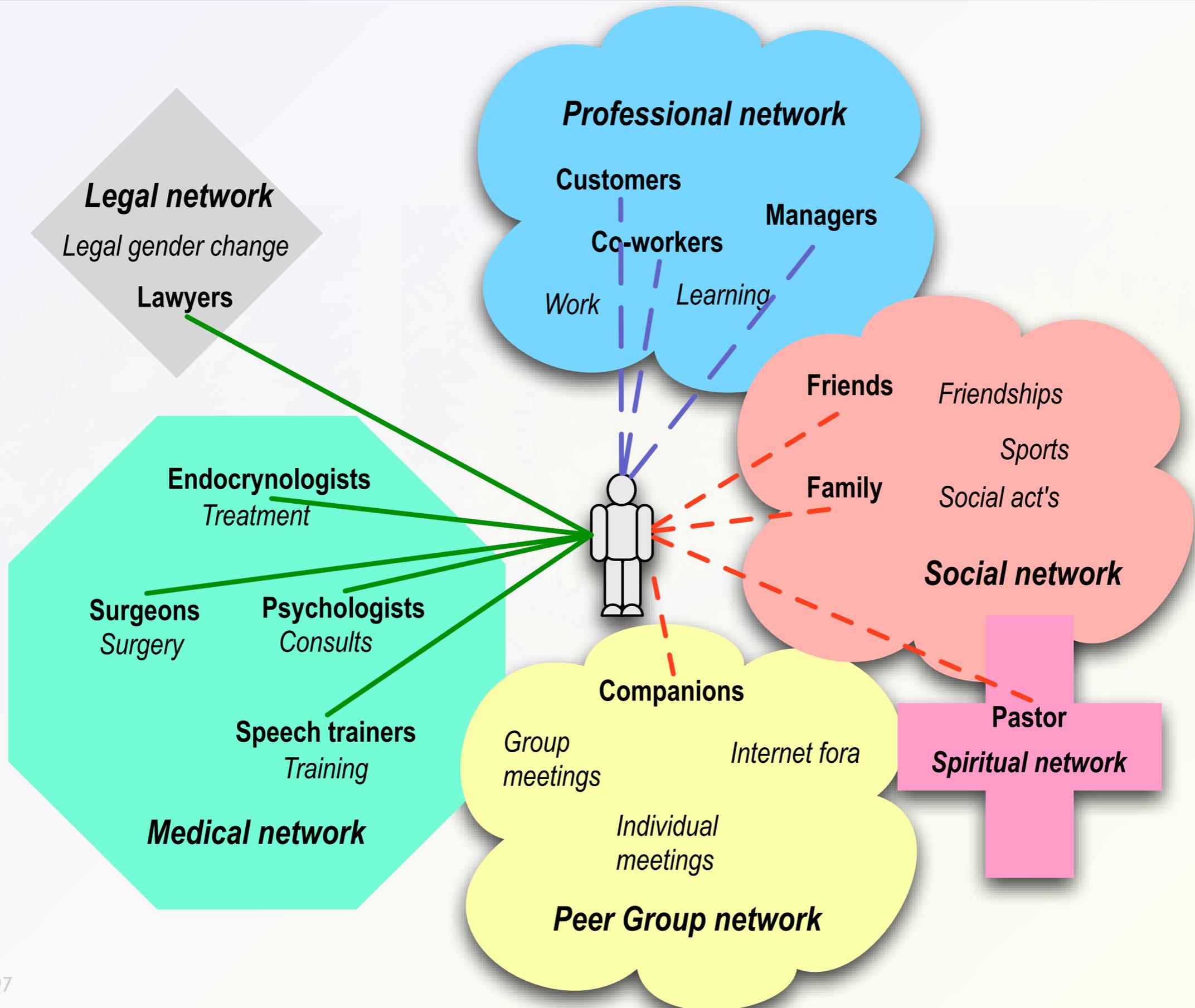
# Networks involved: a simple visual representation



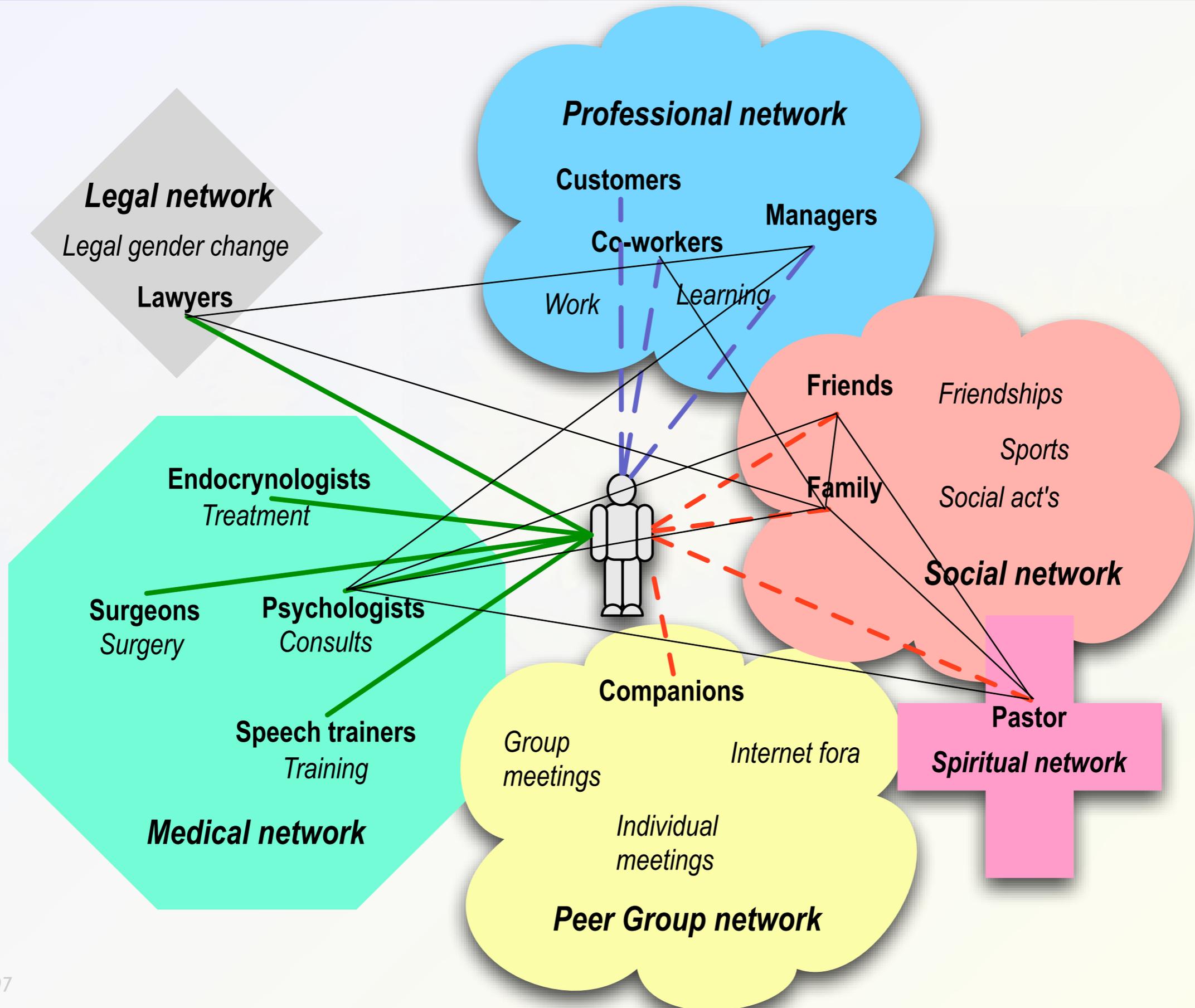
# Network linking

- *Many of the fore mentioned networks are interlinked. Either by formal process links or informal content links.*
  - *For example:*
    - *the family network is usually interlinked with medical networks thru process links (protocol) and is interlinked with peer group networks thru content (peer support)*
    - *the medical network is interlinked with the legal network thru process links (law) and is interlinked with peer group networks thru content (influencing patients treatment choices)*
- *Some links between networks are hidden for some of the actors.*
  - *For example:*
    - *the medical network is not aware of the influence of (and has no access to) peer group networks on the patient's choices and opinion on the medical network and individual doctors. (people frequently 'flee' from treatment in the Netherlands based on information shared within internet communities on track records of specific surgeons.)*

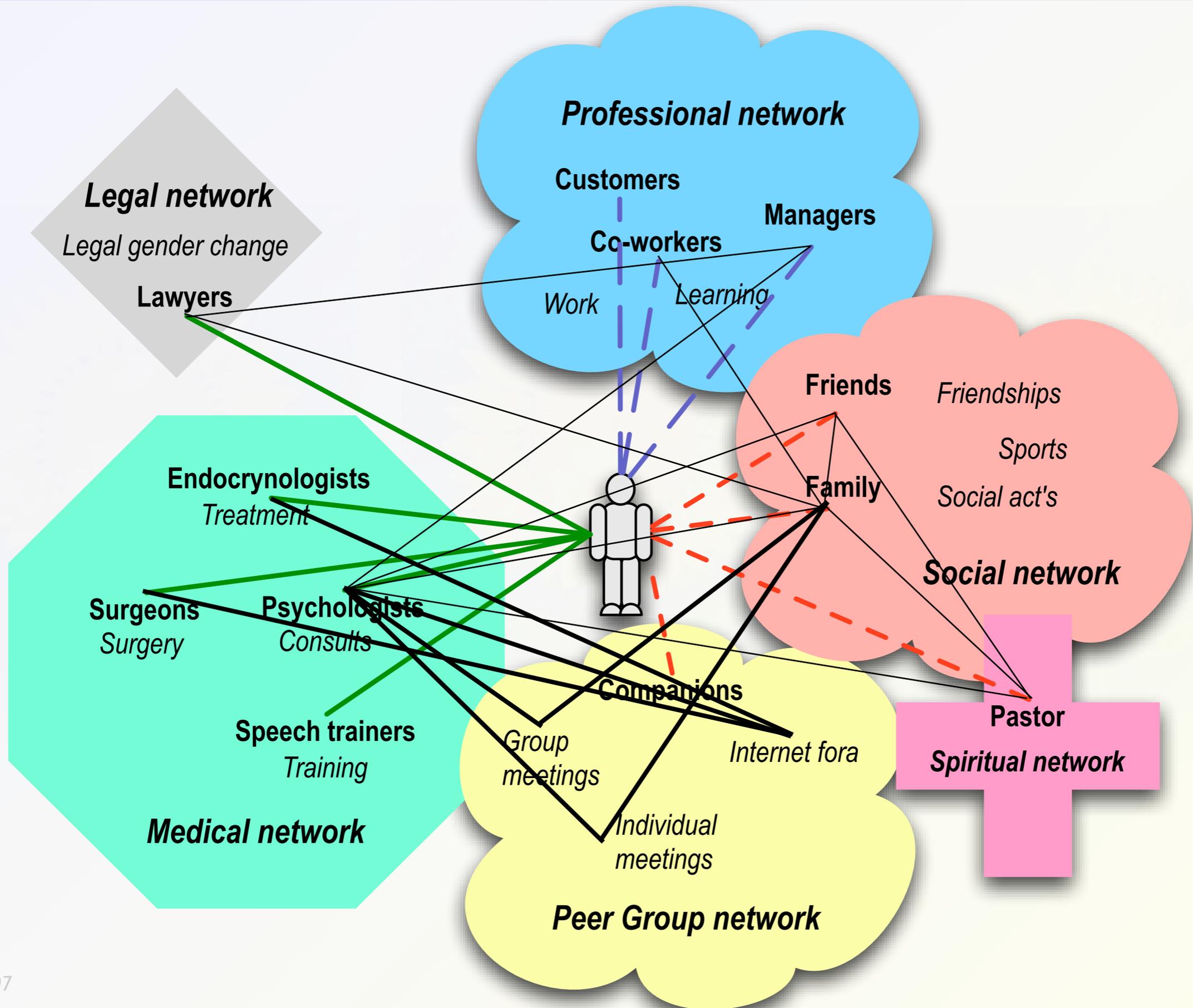
# Networks involved: some hidden links



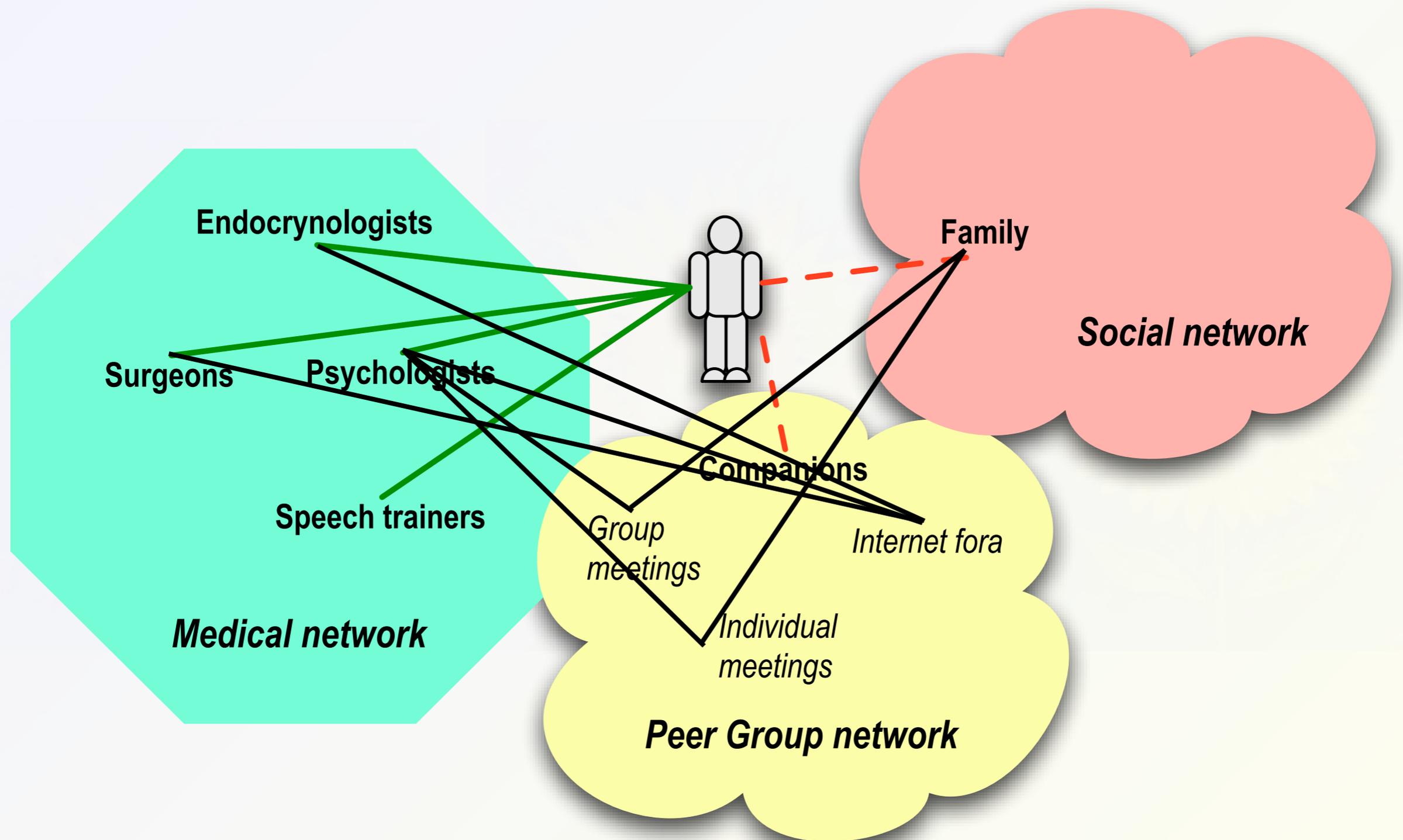
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# Network research domain



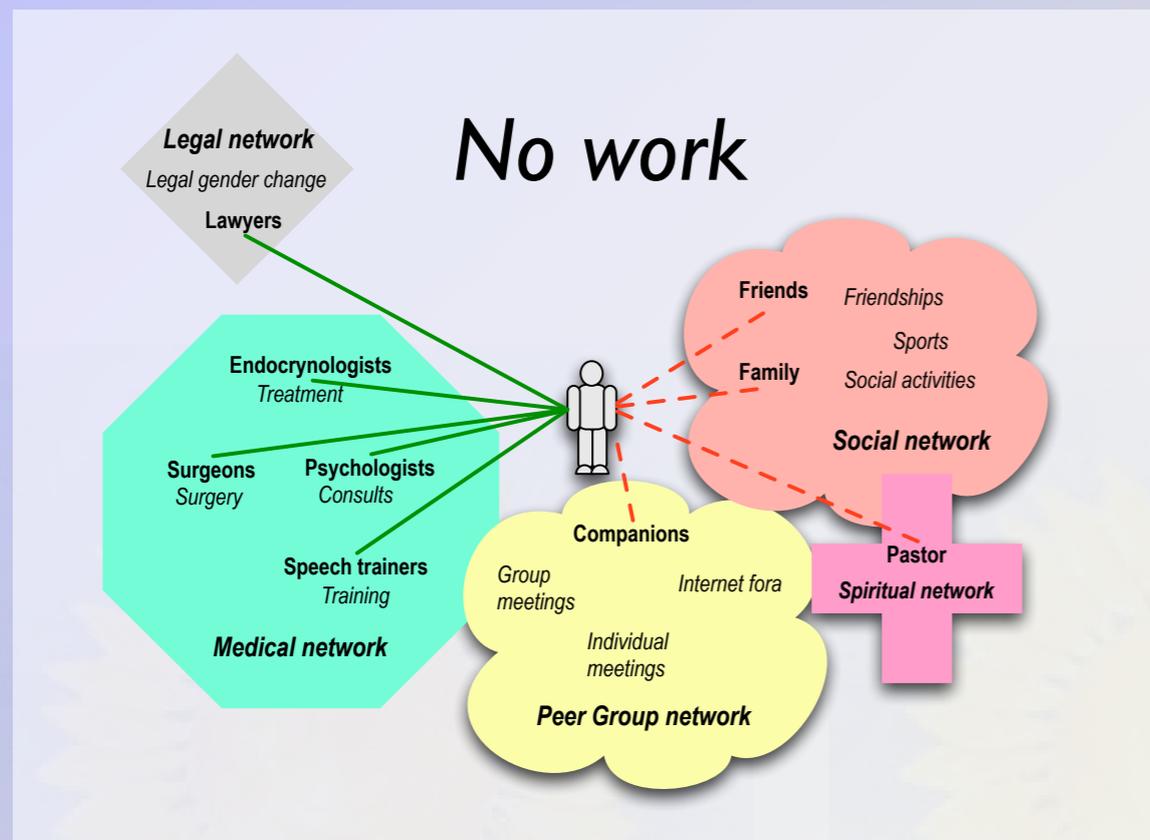
# Possible 'missing link' effects

- *So what are expected effects of the hidden or missing link between for instance the medical and the peer group networks?*
  - *Increase of alternative treatments outside the Netherlands*
  - *Possible reputational damage to medical workers*
  - *Decreasing knowledge within the medical network on extend and demography of the group involved*
  - *Decreasing knowledge within the medical network on developments within the group involved (e.g. shift in gender thinking from gender dichotomy to gender continuity)*
  - *Possible mismatch between treatment offered en desired*
  - *Possible decrease of treatment in the Netherlands*
  - *Possible decrease of medical budgets*

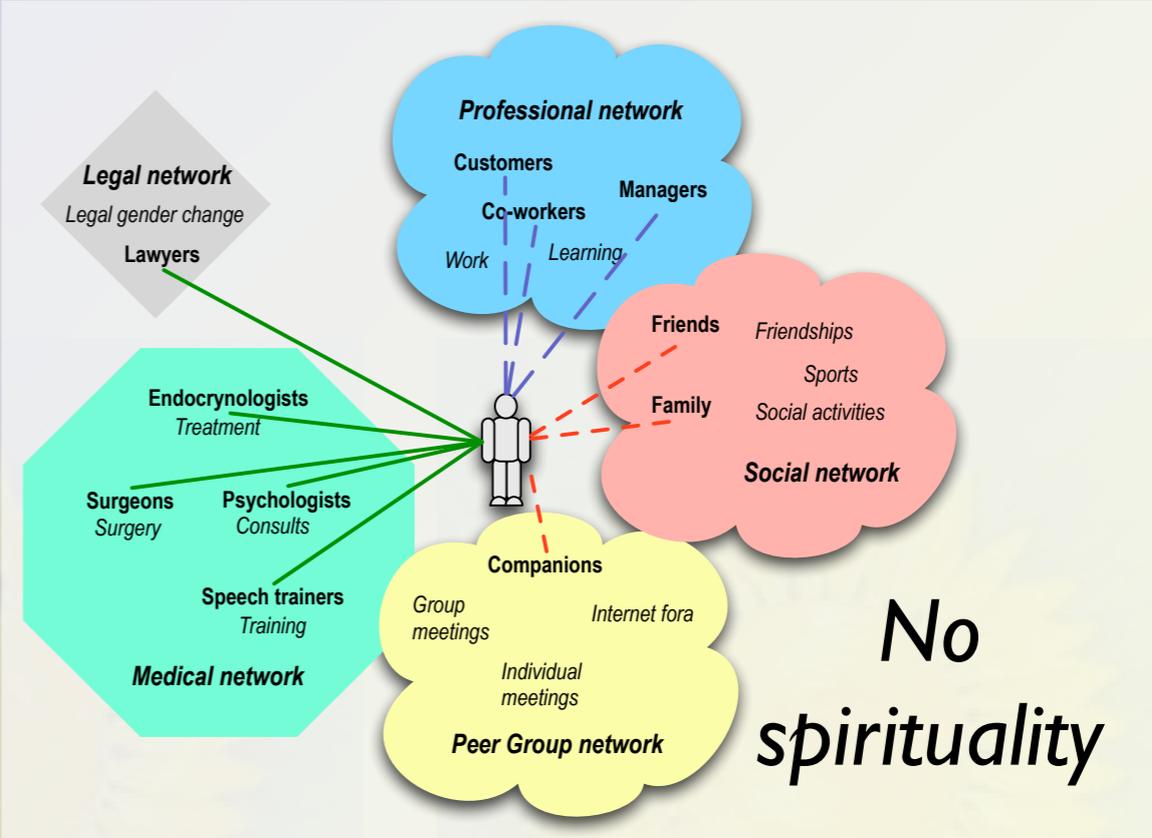
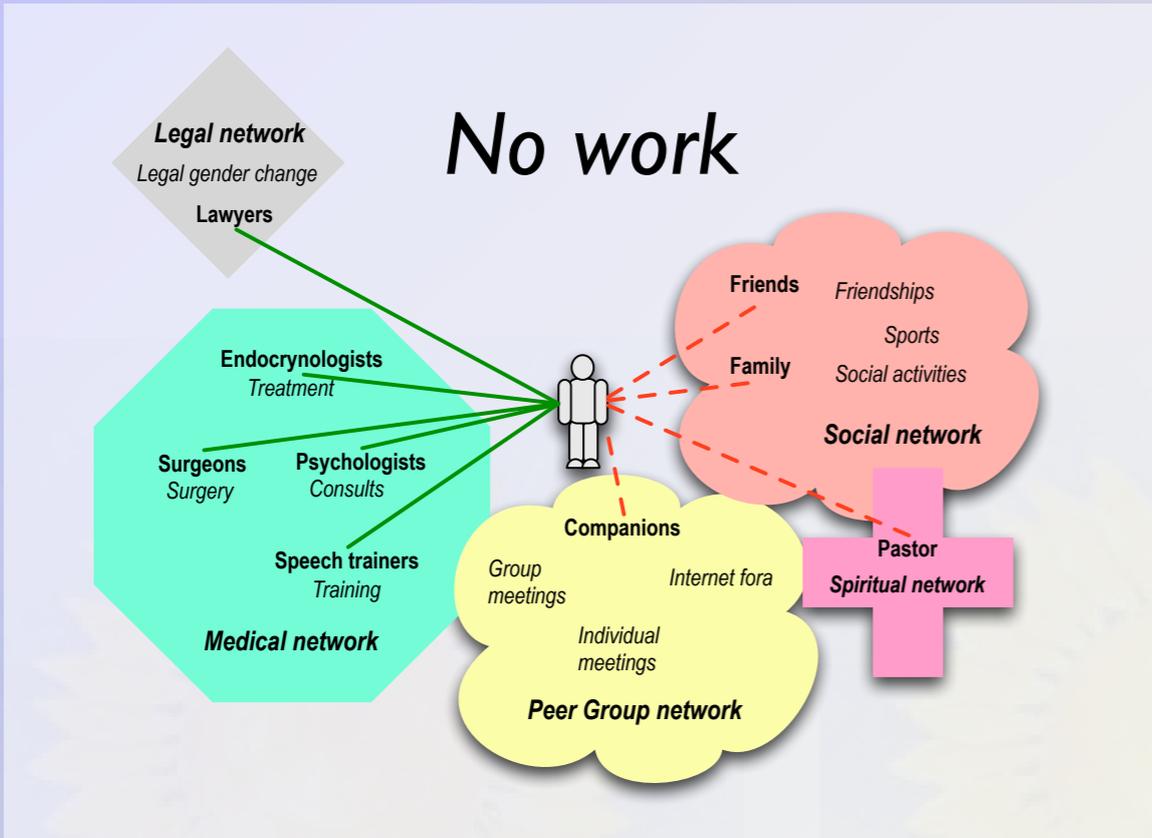
# Challenge: networks found when life is incomplete...



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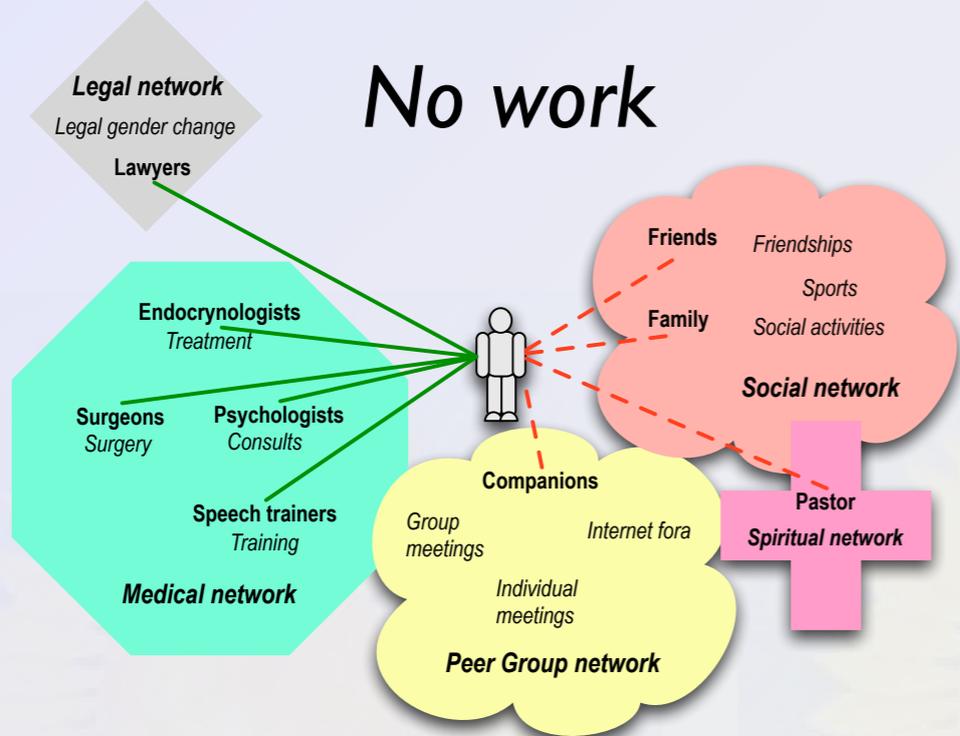


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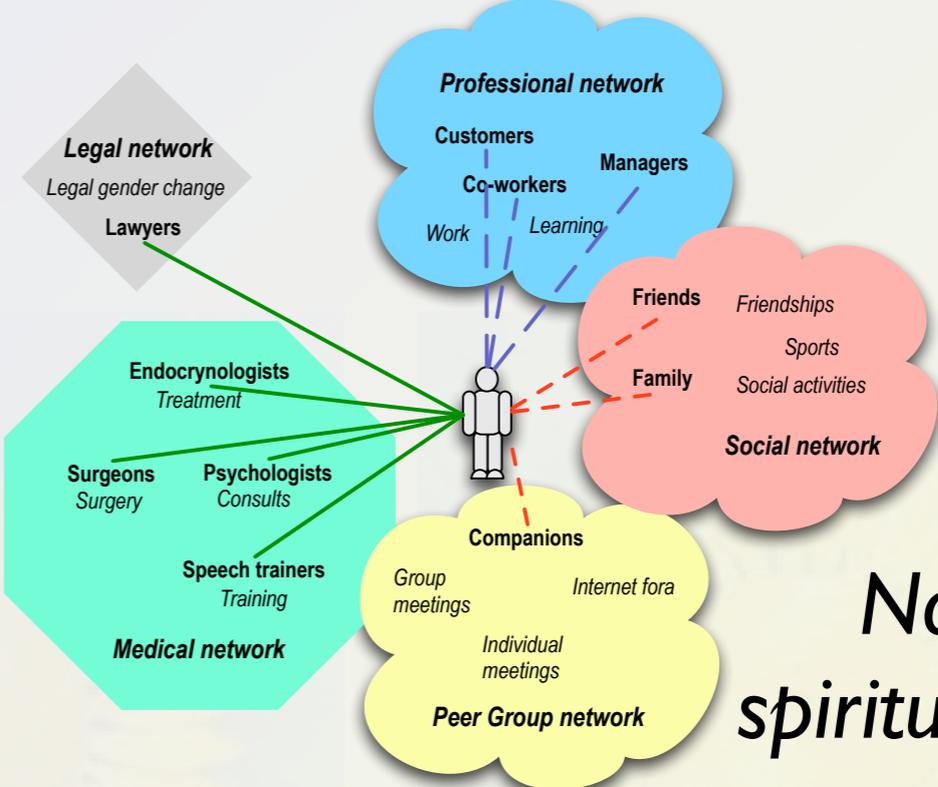


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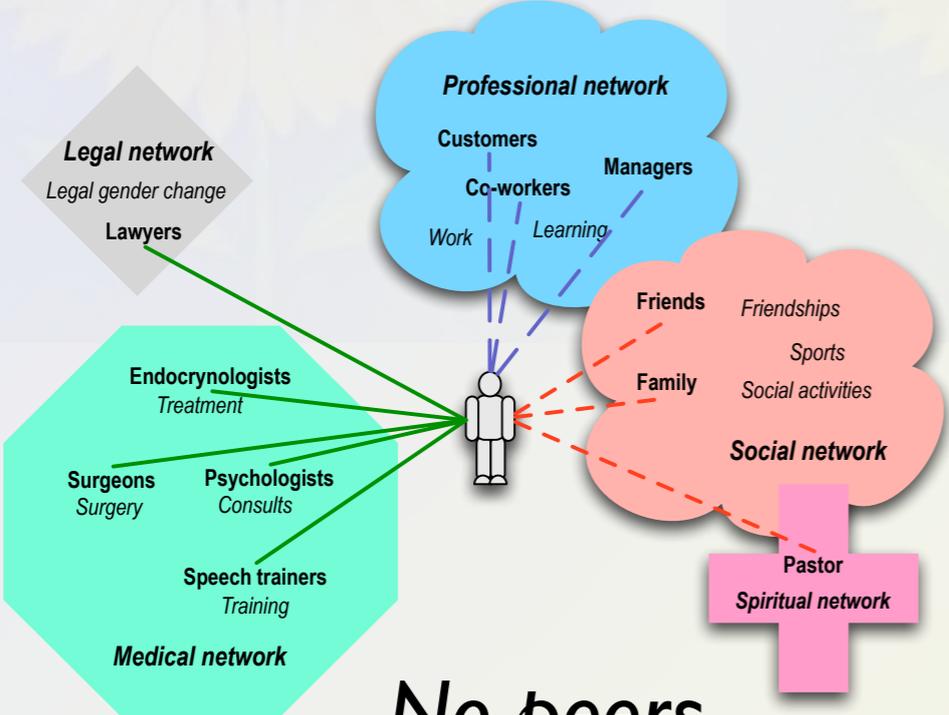
No work



No spirituality

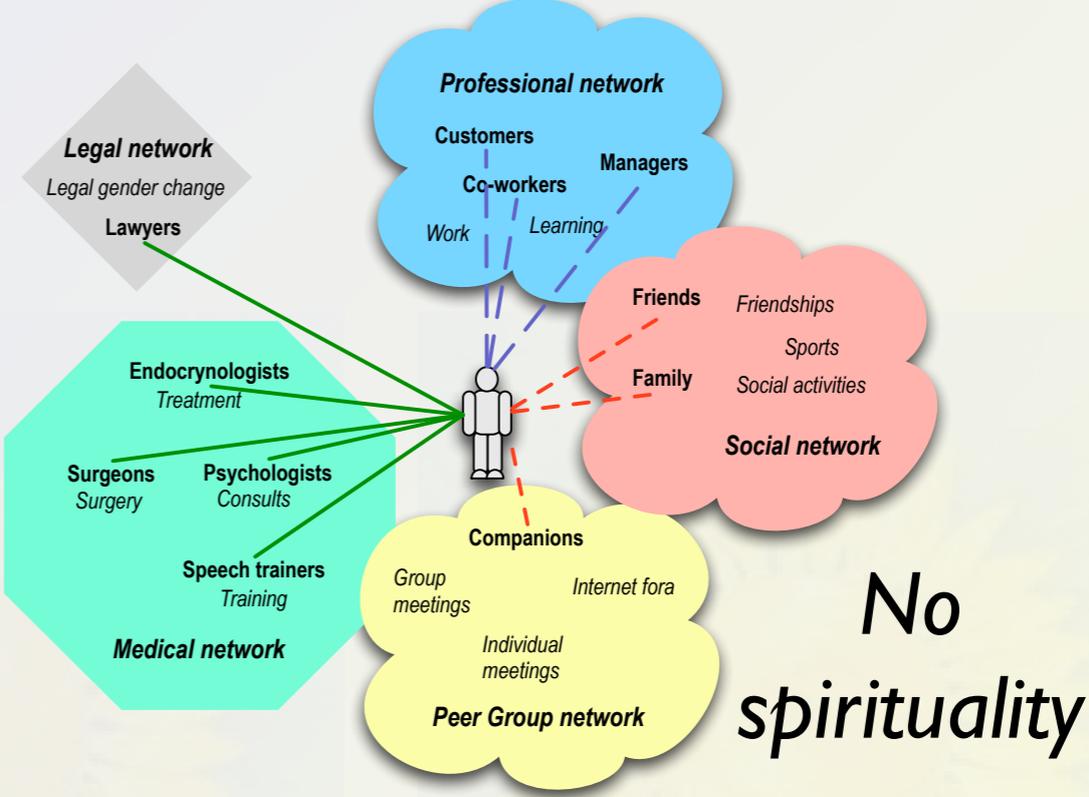
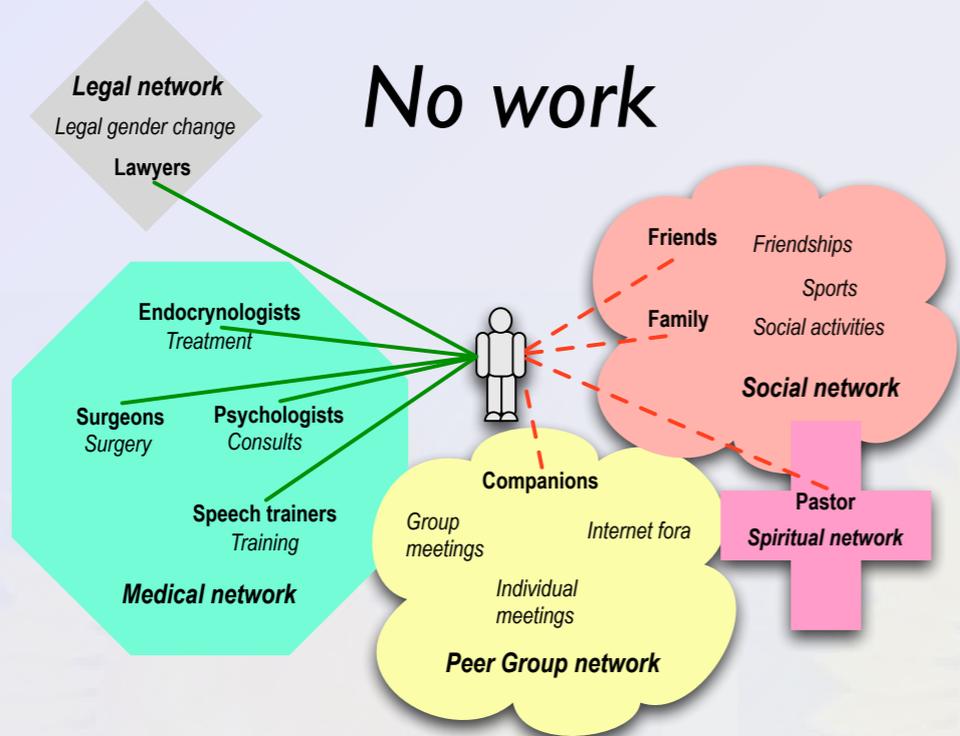


No peers



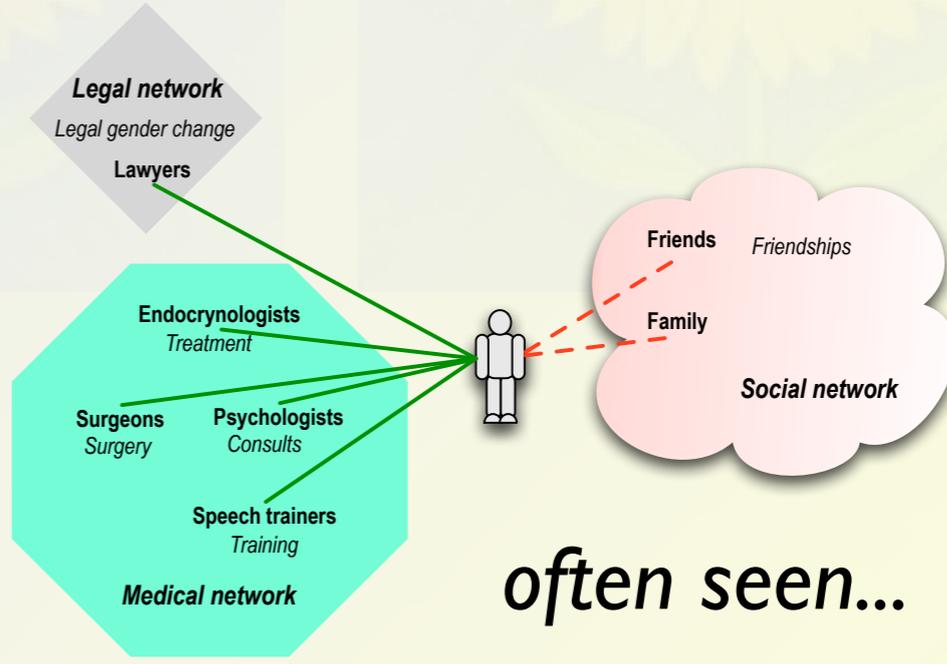
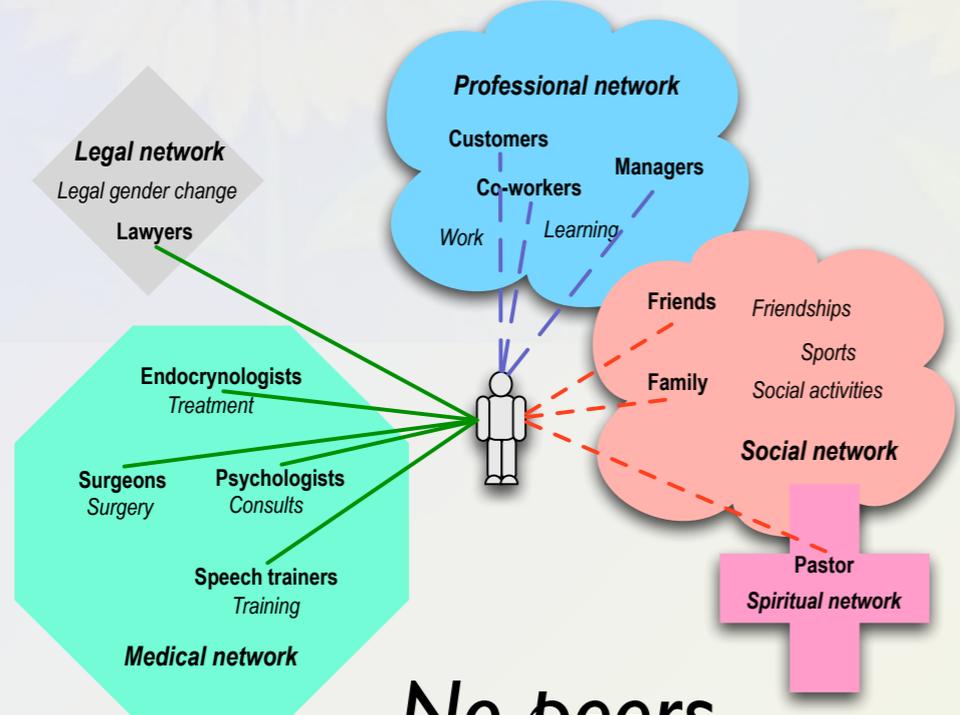
# Challenge: networks found when life is incomplete...

No work



No spirituality

No peers



often seen...

# Other challenges

- *How to separate valid and non-valid information transferred through online communities?*
  - *Simple statistical analysis on postings seems not to be enough due to alias-behaviour and differences between online behaviour and opinions compared to those in real life.*
  - *Does this require specific psychological analysis of content?*
- *How to analyse and proof influences of online information transfer that effect care processes?*
- *How to construct a trustworthy overview of hidden links and their effects?*
- *How to analyse network hub behaviour?*



*Any questions?*

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