Oral Presentation

Off the Couch and Out the Door: Improving Treatment Through a Refined Understanding of Psychotherapeutic Change

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Abstract

State-of-the-art psychotherapy for anxiety disorders represents some of the most efficacious treatments in the mental health literature. Nevertheless, these treatments are not panacea. Too many patients drop out of treatment, response rates leave room for improvement, and residual symptomatology is common. The quest to improve therapy for patients suffering from mental disorders necessitates ongoing refinement of theories, research questions, and methodologies. This presentation will illustrate this iterative process with data from two randomized controlled trials (i.e., Cognitive Behavioral Treatment and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) on Panic Disorder. Utilizing data from clinical outcomes and experimental paradigms imbedded within these trials, I will present results on efficacy, drop-out, mechanism of action, and long-term outcomes that provide important clues for understanding who gets better, who doesn't, and-importantly -why. The question will be examined whether "getting off the couch and out of the therapy room" is step ideally suited to help achieve further refinements in our treatment. Together with theorization about how patients relate to symptoms and well-being, I will review how these data can contribute to the refinement of psychotherapeutic change in general.

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