E-Mailed Standardized Cognitive Behavioural Treatment of Work-Related Stress: A Randomized Controlled Trial.

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Please notice: This study is in review in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

Abstract

**Objective**: To assess the effects of a 7-week standardized Cognitive Behavioural Treatment (CBT) of work-related stress conducted via E-mail. **Participants**: 342 people applied for treatment in reaction to a newspaper article. Initial screening reduced the sample to a heterogeneous (sub)clinical group of 239 of participants. **Design**: participants were randomly assigned to a waiting list condition (n = 62), or to immediate treatment (n = 177). A follow-up was conducted three years after the inception of the treatment. **Outcome Measures**: The Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-42) and the Emotional Exhaustion scale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory - General Survey (MBI-GS). **Results**: Fifty participants (21%) dropped out. Both groups showed statistically significant improvements. Intention-to-treat ANCOVA’s revealed that participants in the treatment condition improved significantly more than the participants in the waiting control condition (.001 < p ≤ .025). In the treatment group, the effects were large to moderate [0.9 (stress) ≥ d ≥ 0.5 (anxiety)]. The between-group effects ranged from d=0.6 (stress) to d=0.1 (anxiety). At follow-up, the effects were more pronounced, but this result requires replication in view of high attrition at follow-up. **Conclusion**: The results warrant further research on Internet-driven standardized CBT for work-related stress. Such research should include the direct comparison of this treatment with face-to-face treatment, and should address the optimal level of therapist contact in Internet-driven treatment.

**KEYWORDS**: remote psychotherapy, treatment manual, Internet-driven therapy, stress management, burnout, cognitive behaviour therapy, Interapy, E-health.