Internet-Delivered Exposure Therapy Training for Parents of Children With Anxiety: Therapist and Parent Perceptions of Usability

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Abstract:
Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) has been identified as an effective form of treatment for childhood anxiety disorders, but many families are unable to access it. One possible way of increasing access to treatment is by providing online CBT training to parents so that they can implement CBT with their children at home. Exposure therapy is a particularly beneficial component of CBT but poses unique challenges in the development of a parent-administered, Internet-delivered CBT (ICBT) program, as research suggests that parents may be hesitant to implement exposure techniques with their children. Few studies have investigated ways to address such challenges. The aim of the present study was to develop and test the usability of a parent-administered, online exposure therapy module. The exposure therapy module was created in conjunction with six other modules, which together comprised a larger, parent-administered, ICBT program. The program, titled The Child Anxiety Course for Parents, was based on the University of Manitoba’s self-help, parent-administered Coaching for Confidence program, but was modified to reflect a therapist-guided mode of delivery. An iterative approach was used to test four domains of the module’s usability: acceptability, clarity, user-friendliness, and feasibility. During the first testing iteration, 10 therapists reviewed the exposure therapy module and provided verbal feedback during focus groups. Their feedback was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach and was incorporated into further development of the module. The primary suggestions that emerged from therapist feedback were to: include more detailed information for parents; provide parents with more encouragement; and incorporate references to information contained in other modules of the program (e.g., cognitive restructuring). Therapists also expressed satisfaction with the proposed mode of therapist guidance (i.e., a weekly check-in e-mail message from a therapist), although some suggested increasing the contact to twice per week. During the second testing iteration, five parents of children with anxiety reviewed the module, provided verbal feedback during individual sessions, and completed usability questionnaires. Descriptive analyses were used to assess usability ratings while thematic analysis was once again employed to analyze verbal feedback. Parent feedback was generally favourable, as parents relayed high levels of satisfaction with module content and with the prospect of a weekly check-in with a therapist. The primary suggestion for module improvement was to include more examples showcasing the implementation of exposure therapy. Based on parent feedback, the exposure therapy module was finalized. Changes to the module from therapist and parent feedback resulted in an acceptable, clear, user-friendly, and feasible exposure therapy module ready to be implemented and its efficacy evaluated in further studies. Findings are expected to inform future research into parent-administered exposure therapy for childhood anxiety disorders. Furthermore, The Child Anxiety Course for Parents, which is expected to eventually serve as a treatment option for families in Saskatchewan, is one of the only known therapist-guided, parent-administered programs delivered entirely via the Internet. By contributing to the development of such a program, the present study may ultimately assist in increasing children’s access to mental health services, thereby reducing anxiety among Saskatchewan children.

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Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Exposure Therapy, and Other Anxiety Treatments. If you suffer from panic attacks, obsessive thoughts, unrelenting worries, or an incapacitating phobia, you may have an anxiety disorder. But you don’t have to live with anxiety and fear. Treatment can help, and for many anxiety problems, therapy is a good place to start. Certain types of therapy, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and exposure therapy, are particularly beneficial. These therapies can teach you how to control your anxiety levels, stop worrisome thoughts, and conquer your fears.

Treating Internet-delivered CBT interventions (iCBT) are those treatments in which the content of the treatment is presented online (for a synthesis of iCBT interventions see [10]). There is evidence that iCBT is an efficient intervention for anxiety disorders in youths of all ages, from preschoolers to adolescents. Data on the usability of this intervention show that the app was frequently used during the first week, while the level of usage decreased during treatment, the compliance rate was high, and it was considered easy to use. Parents reported a high level of satisfaction with the intervention. Therapist helped children and their parents in exposure to fearful stimuli sessions. There was high satisfaction with the treatment reported by parents and children. Figure 2. Universal parental support for parents of adolescents: Who wants municipality-based parental support and in what form? Parenting a child through adolescence can be a challenge for many parents; adolescents go through notable developmental, physical, and psychological changes that affect the relationships around them. Trends in the awareness, acceptability, and usage of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis among at-risk men who have sex with men in Toronto. Internet-delivered CBT for Children With Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders - an Open Pilot Study. This pilot-study aims to evaluate the effect size and feasibility of internet-delivered cognitive behavior therapy (ICBT) for children (age 8-12 years) with pain-predominant functional gas.