

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy For Depression and Anxiety Disorders

Review 15

Spek, V., Cuijpers, P., Nyklicek, I., Riper, H., Keyzer, J., & Pop, V. (2007). Internet-based cognitive behaviour therapy for symptoms of depression and anxiety: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Medicine*, 37, 319–328. PubMed abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17112400>.

Objectives	Determine the effectiveness of Internet-based cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), with or without minimal therapist assistance, for symptoms of depression and anxiety.
Studies Included	Twelve U.S. and international studies from 2001 to 2006
Participants in the Studies	Adults 18 and older; both clinical patients and subjects recruited from the community
Settings	Settings were not reported for all the studies.
Outcomes	Anxiety and depression symptoms
Limitations of the Studies	Because Internet-based CBT is a relatively new area of research, the number of included studies was small; studies on depression had large numbers of participants, while studies on anxiety had small numbers of participants, so power largely differed across studies; different inclusion criteria were used in different studies for participants; there was lack of subject blinding to treatment condition, lack of assessor blinding to treatment condition on some occasions, and variability in study design.

Results

This review examined the effectiveness of Internet-based interventions for anxiety and depression, with or without minimal therapist support in comparison to control groups. A meta-analysis of 12 randomized controlled trials indicated Internet-based interventions for anxiety symptoms were much more effective than those targeted for symptoms of depression. However, this might be explained by differences in the amount of therapist support. That is, those interventions that included therapist support had a large effect size, while those interventions without therapist support evidenced a small effect size, suggesting the effectiveness of the interventions was greatly enhanced by the addition of therapist support. These results suggest it is not the type of problem differentiating between large and small effect sizes but the distinction between whether support is added. However, because of the substantial differences in the design of the studies that were included (differences in symptoms and differences in treatment), future studies are needed to support this hypothesis. Overall, Internet-based interventions, especially those that include therapist support, are effective in the treatment of anxiety and depression symptoms.