

## **Evaluation of Transactional Analysis Psychotherapy Groups In Primary Care Within an IAPT Site**

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### **Introduction**

Groups have been used in psychotherapy for decades and encompass a wide variety of structures and approaches. They have been used to raise awareness, develop skills and deal with psychological distress. Because of their versatility and cost effectiveness they are an important resource in increasing access to psychological therapies. So far, most of the treatments within IAPT services consist of individual, mostly CBT therapy, and structured groups targeted on single issues, such as sleep, relaxation etc. Psychotherapy groups are not widely available.

To address this, Metanoia Institute has teamed up with an existing IAPT site in London to provide Transactional Analysis groups and evaluate their effectiveness in this context. The project is ongoing. The evaluation reported in this paper relates to group outcomes between September 2010 and February 2012.

### **Literature**

There are a number of research studies into the uses of group psychotherapy and counselling in both health and educational settings. Group treatments are rooted in the rich tradition of therapeutic theory and practice and used in a variety of settings for prevention, personal development and education, counselling and psychotherapy. They span psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioural and humanistic theoretical orientations.

Current research evidence shows that group psychotherapy is effective with different client groups: clients suffering from anxiety and depression, (Chen, Lu, Chang, Chu, & Chou, 2006; Dodding, Nasel, Murphy, & Howell, 2008), HIV infected clients (Himmelhoch, Medoff, & Oyeniy, 2007), adults who have experienced childhood sexual abuse (Lau & Kristensen, 2007), girls (age 9-15) who attend school for children with complex needs (Flitton, Buckroyd, & Vassiliou, 2006) and others.

However, this body of research doesn't fully represent a range of theoretical approaches currently used in group therapy. Transactional Analysis focused on group therapy from its inception, and maintains group work in training and certification of psychotherapists. Some evaluative studies of Transactional Analysis groupwork are available within psychiatric settings (Thunnissen, Duivenvoorden, & Trijsburg, 2002) and therapeutic communities working with addiction (Ohlsson, 2002). The structure and flexibility of Transactional Analysis, and its emphasis on client empowerment, make it an important resource for working with the diverse patient populations within primary care. The particular IAPT service in London, which is the subject of this study, caters for clients who experience high levels of deprivation and operates within a multicultural environment of South London.

### **Research Aims**

This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Transactional Analysis psychotherapy group treatment within the existing primary care service, which provides a range of psychological treatments and evaluation as one of the IAPT sites (CSIP, 2008,).

The project is a naturalistic study, which means clients and therapists are not specially chosen for research, which takes place within the ordinary practice setting, rather than a laboratory. Therapists are senior TA students at Metanoia Institute, which specialises in the relational approach to Transactional Analysis. The evaluation is quantitative and representative of the methodology used within IAPT.

Groups are time limited (16 sessions) and facilitated by Transactional Analysis psychotherapists, students at Metanoia Institute, who are on placement within PTiPC. Each group takes 2 hours and is conducted weekly.

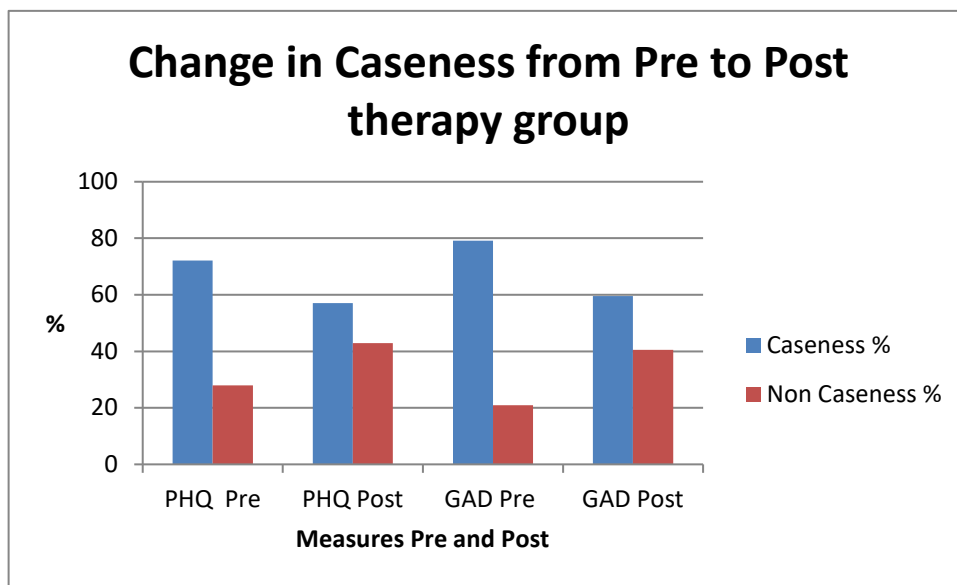
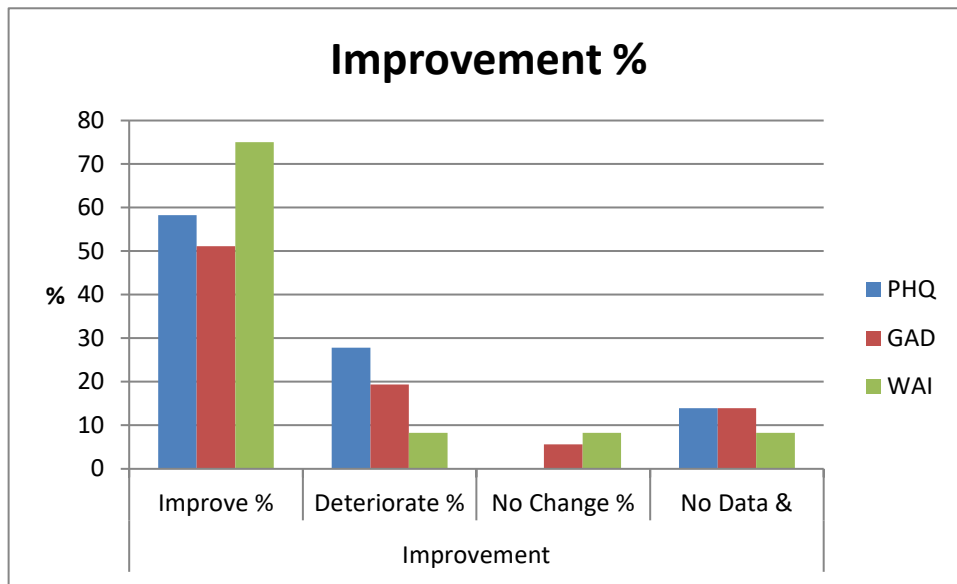
To conduct evaluation therapists are using standardised questionnaires, PHQ-9 (K. Kroenke, Spitzer, Williams, Monahan, & Lowe, 2007) and GAD-7 (K. Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2001) at every session. These questionnaires are commonly used within each IAPT service.

In addition to that, Relational Transactional Analysis focuses on the therapeutic relationship as central to psychotherapy. To address this the clients were asked to complete a standardised working alliance inventory or WAI, (Bordin, 1979) after each group session.

## **Outcomes**

Eight groups have been completed until February 2012 and 2 still are ongoing. 48 clients have been seen to date, 12 were still attending current groups. The evaluation was completed for 36 patients, who were representative of the service in terms of age, ethnicity and employment status. Table below shows improvement rates and caseness. Caseness is a measure used in IAPT services and represents the severity of the symptoms as measured by the questionnaires (GAD-7 and PHQ-9). Unlike these clinical questionnaires, Working Alliance Inventory (WAI) is a contextual measure, which shows the flow of the therapeutic relationship.

	<b>Improvement</b>				<b>Caseness</b>		
	<b>Improve %</b>	<b>Deteriorate %</b>	<b>No Change %</b>	<b>No Data &amp;</b>	<b>Caseness %</b>	<b>Non Caseness %</b>	<b>Difference Caseness Pre and post %</b>
<b>PHQ</b>	58.3	27.8		13.9	<b>PHQ Pre</b> 72.1	27.9	
					<b>PHQ Post</b> 57.1	42.9	15
<b>GAD</b>	51.1	19.4	5.6	13.9	<b>GAD Pre</b> 79.1	20.9	
<b>WAI</b>	75	8.3	8.3	8.3	<b>GAD Post</b> 59.5	40.5	19.6



## Conclusions

These outcomes show that Transactional Analysis psychotherapy groups result in changes in the levels of depression and anxiety, as well as changes to the levels of caseness, which is a more clinically significant measure of improvement. The percentage change is comparative to the current rates of improvement using CBT (Glover, Webb, Evison, & Northoff, 2010). IAPT services aim for a 50% improvement in depression and anxiety, but improvement rates vary in practice and are frequently below this level, as shown in the latest report. The improvement rates for our TA groups are above that expected level, and also show a high level of the working

alliance. However, this picture is limited by its scale. It is a useful snapshot which shows the potential for TA psychotherapy groups within IAPT. For a fuller and more reliable research a bigger sample is needed as well as the more in depth evaluation of the work which takes place within the groups. Large scale quantitative evaluation and in depth case studies would help to build a fuller research evidence base for TA psychotherapy within the NHS

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