

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy For Depression and Anxiety Disorders

Review 7

Hofmann, S. G., & Smits, J. A. (2008). Cognitive-behavioral therapy for adult anxiety disorders: A meta-analysis of randomized placebo-controlled trials. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 69(4), 621–632. PubMed abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18363421>.

Objectives	Determine the acute efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) as compared to placebo for adult anxiety disorders, and examine whether the number of treatment sessions, the placebo modality, and publication year moderate treatment outcome.
Studies Included	Twenty-seven U.S. and international studies from 1991 to 2006
Participants in the Studies	Adults (18–65) diagnosed with a DSM-IV anxiety disorder
Settings	Settings were not reported for the studies.
Outcomes	Severity of anxiety disorder (i.e., symptom severity, symptom frequency, quality of life) and severity of depression
Limitations of the Studies	Many studies did not report intent-to-treat data; specific treatment techniques and the emphasis on various treatment components differed from disorder to disorder (and among the different anxiety disorders), which might account for differences in treatment efficacy; there was variation in the nature of the placebo conditions, and some placebo conditions may have been more efficacious than others; the lack of data on impact of attrition may impact strength of findings.

Results

CBT is effective for adult anxiety disorders, with the strongest effect sizes observed for obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and acute stress disorder. CBT was significantly more effective than placebo in reducing depression symptoms only in those diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder and OCD. CBT for OCD was more effective than CBT for panic disorder. The effectiveness of CBT on anxiety disorders and depression symptom severity was not moderated by number of sessions, publication year, or placebo modality (i.e., psychological versus pill placebo). Overall, these findings support the specificity of CBT for most of the anxiety disorders.