CBT for Pain: an Introduction for Physical Therapists

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Psychologically Informed Physical Therapy Practice: Pragmatic Application for Low Back Pain

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Pre-Course Module: CBT

1. What is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?
   1. Principles
   2. Practicalities

2. How can CBT skills help you to help your patients?
COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

History / Context:
• A type of psychotherapy approach
• Brief, designed to improve coping
  • depression, anxiety, chronic illness
  • pain


Principle Assumptions of CBT
• Individuals actively process environmental events and internal stimuli (thoughts, emotions, perceptions) and consequences of behaviors.
• Thoughts, emotional responses, physiological and behavioral responses interact and influence one another.
• Individuals’ behaviors also influence/change the environment.

Turk DC, Rudy TE (1989) Handbook of chronic pain management

Principles of CBT
• Treatment must address the cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions of the presenting problem.
• The patient must become an active participant in treatment.

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CBT: ACTIVE Processing of Internal Events

- Sensations
- Behaviors
- Thoughts
- Emotions / Moods

Will this EVER get Better???

Pain

CBT: External Events and Contexts also Actively Processed

- Social / family context
- Personal / Cultural
- Medical systems
- Socioeconomic context
The ‘vicious cycle’ of pain

The other side of the story:
- Repeated visits to HCP*
- Increased sense of helplessness
- HCP angry, rejecting
- Patient’s isolation increases

*Health Care Provider

CBT and other Behavioral treatments for pain

The Foundation – A Collaborative Interpersonal Relationship

Principles of CBT

- Treatment must address the cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions of the presenting problem, as well as the physical dimensions.

- The patient must become an active participant in treatment.
CBT components

- **Education and goal setting**
  - Your problem is *NOT* unmanageable
  - You are a resourceful problem-solver - *NOT* helpless

- **Monitoring**
  - Symptoms, environmental and psychosocial factors

- **Skills development and practice**
  - Physiologic relaxation, re-framing thoughts, other pain coping skills

- **Maintenance**
  - Planning for end of treatment
  - Generalizing skills to other situations

CBT Specifics

- **Identify and Assess** - monitoring (body / mind)
- **Re-conceptualize using biopsychosocial model**
- **Pleasant activity scheduling**
- **Breath focus/Relaxation/guided imagery**
- **Target unhelpful thinking via Cognitive Reframing**
- **Communication skills/conflict resolution**
- **Skills practice and Generalization**
- **Develop long-term goals**


CBT Psychotherapy vs. CBT-informed Physical Therapy practice?
CBT Principles and Practicalities for Physical Therapists

• How can CBT skills help you to help your patients?
  – Enhance communication / understanding
  – Active partnership – agree on goals
  – Simple skills for managing pain and increasing resilience

Psychologically Informed PT
Overall Intention

• Empower the person toward good self care
  – Self manage pain and mood
  – Not helpless
  – Resilience

• How do we do that?
• Where is the roadmap?

Psychologically Informed PT for pain

The Foundation – A Collaborative Interpersonal Relationship
Psychologically Informed PT
Overall Intention

• Empower the Physical Therapist toward resilience
  – Awareness of your views of the patient
    • Expectations/assumptions/moods
  – How do these influence your behavior?
    The way you work with the person?

• Simple skills for you to use with patients at high-risk for chronic pain

Psychologically Informed PT
Overall Intention

• Communication Skills
  – Active listening, goal-setting, problem-solving

• Pain coping skills for you to use with patients at high-risk for chronic pain
  – Breath-focus, physiologic relaxation
  – Distraction (e.g., pleasant place imagery)
  – Re-framing unhelpful thinking patterns

Psychologically Informed PT Training

Other Pre-Course Module:
• Pain coping skills

Face-to-Face Training:
  Skills Practice and debrief
Summary

- CBT – principles, practicalities
- Pain and CBT principles
- CBT components in psychotherapy
- CBT practicalities for Physical Therapists

Please join us at face-to-face training sessions!

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Thank you for your attention –
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