

The Benefits of Osteopathy implemented into Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Protocols.

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Introduction

As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, mental health therapists and crisis responders are experiencing an overwhelming demand for their services. Mental health is in fact an emerging potential crisis due to the high levels of emotional distress, job instability, social isolation and simply the fear of the virus.

Today, organizations such as Kids Help Phone, Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) offer free services in Canada for those in distress or in need of discrete aid. In particular, CMHA has been rapidly hiring and training new therapists whom they call BounceBack® coaches to meet the high demand of their services. A trained BounceBack® coach will help you learn skills to improve your mental health in up to six telephone sessions over three to six months. The coach will help keep individuals on track and offer support as you work through the program materials. Bounceback coaches have reported an increase of concerns about physical health since January 2020, (BounceBack Ontario, 2006). Since the lockdown, physical therapists including manual osteopaths, chiropractors, physiotherapists, massage therapists were all under mandatory closure causing a halt in treatment plans. Bounceback coaches recommend not just mental exercises but also physical exercises or activities to destress and reduce anxiety. Activities included outdoor hikes, various types of exercises programs, yoga, stretching, sports etc. These activities were also put on hold while our world was required to be quarantined and recommended to stay isolated and to only leave home if needed.

Currently, mental health therapists have found research to support the association of integrating mental health therapy and physical therapy as an effective treatment method for both short and long term results. In addition, osteopathy has proven to be effective for reducing anxiety and psychological distress, as well as improving patient self-care (Saracutu, 2017). With this paper I will discuss how implementing osteopathic treatments into cognitive behavioural therapy will benefit and accelerate positive results for a healthier lifestyle. The patient will be introduced to a mental plan for better problem solving skills to reduce anxiety and achieve a happier, healthier lifestyle physically and mentally. Moreover, osteopathy can also be used as a follow up treatment long after completing cognitive behavioural therapy to avoid relapse.

What is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)?

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is a short-term, goal oriented form of psychotherapy that is used to help people to develop skills and strategies for becoming and staying healthy mentally. The structured therapy is time limited and is problem focused to form a proactive, therapeutic relationship between the therapist and client.

CBT helps people to examine how they make sense of what is happening around them and how these perceptions affect the way they feel. In turn how it affects their behaviour as well. It can be thought of as a combination of psychotherapy and behavioural therapy.

History of CBT

CBT was first invented by a psychiatrist, Aaron Beck in the 1960s. During psychoanalysis he observed his patients tended to have internal dialogues in their minds, questioning themselves. Beck also noticed that his patients would

only report some of their feelings with him, as other thoughts were not recognized as important or relevant by the patient.. Patients described their feelings as ‘hard to explain’, therefore leading their sessions nowhere.

Beck linked thoughts and feelings to the term “automatic thoughts” where emotional filled thoughts would pop up without any realization or control. Although you are unable to stop them, one could identify them and understand them. Once these thoughts are identified, one can alter your decisions and behaviour positively. However, identifying the negative thoughts and feelings is seen to be the easier part of the process. Beck believed the importance of CBT was highlighted when one had to think of their feelings consciously and then act on them..

CBT has undergone successful scientific trials in many places by many different teams, and has been applied to a wide variety of problems (Martin. B, 2019). With this opportunity CBT has proven to help implement a balance between behavioural techniques and cognitive elements. It has been seen to benefit those who do not seek to gain only insight on their problems but rather solve their problems such as; anger management, anxiety/ panic attacks, depression, eating problems, phobias, sexual problems, sleep problems, drug/alcohol problems and so on.

How does CBT work?

CBT is effective in helping people with a very specific problem and a mutually established goal between the therapist and client. Most sessions are via telemedicine but can take place in person as well. CBT is not considered to be a long term therapy and may last up to only 20 sessions. Problems are broken down to 5 main areas: situations, thoughts, emotions, physical feelings and actions. They are then discussed about how they are all interconnected and affect each other. The personalized sessions consist of layouts that help a person question themselves as the therapist assists in sorting out and leading them to appropriate conclusions.

The first step is to help identify any psychological problem, help the patient to acknowledge and learn about the psychological problem the patient may be experiencing. Identifying the problem is a huge step towards recovery and improvement.

Participants of this therapy are then given “homework” which consist of journaling and questionnaires to track their progress and thoughts.

CBT Techniques

Additionally, one cannot focus if their body is tense as well. Two strategies used in CBT are calm breathing and progressive muscle relaxation (PMR). While calm breathing involves consciously slowing down your breath, PMR is systematically tensing and relaxing different muscle groups. Unfortunately, these techniques do not eliminate any anxiety but they consciously allow the body to release some subconscious tension or clenching (Martin B, 2019).

When an individual effectively understands the muscle tension in their body, it allows them to concentrate on their thought process and something called realistic thinking. This is one most difficult and time consuming step as the patient is given a variety of options to release tension. For example, yoga, meditation, exercises etc.

Individuals are encouraged to keep a journal to track how they feel, track unhelpful thoughts and record how these techniques have helped them. They are also given “homework” which consists of practical problem solving sheets

that they are to complete on their own time. This encourages self help, notes how far you have come, tracks progress and provides additional resources.

Next we have realistic thinking. Replacing negative thoughts with realistic and balanced thinking can only be achieved if negative thoughts are first identified. Because our thoughts have a big impact on the way we feel, changing our unhelpful thoughts to realistic or helpful ones is a key to feeling better. “Realistic thinking” means looking at yourself, others, and the world in a balanced and fair way, without being overly negative or positive (Anxiety Canada, 2019).

Once you are aware of your thoughts you can then identify how they make you feel and if they are problematic or not. Through self talk you can challenge the negative feelings or thoughts and convert them into realistic statements and positive self-statements. For example, if you have done poorly on your assignment and you are feeling sad, angry and upset. You can ask yourself: “why am I upset, what else could I have done? What can I do now to avoid this?”

Avoiding Relapse

A relapse is a return to your old ways of thinking and behaving before you learned new strategies for managing your problem which can occur during stressful times or low moods. As mentioned above, CBT patients are encouraged to have a journal to record their feelings to track their progress. Later on referring back to these journal entries allows the patient to reflect on their thought process. Practicing this skill allows it to become a habit and managing your problems is a lot like exercise. The more you practice the better your results are which turns into a helpful healthy habit. Eventually one is able to overcome difficult challenges smoothly and adapt to new environments since they are equipped and from all the practice.

Although no one can guarantee one will not relapse, CBT therapists recommend avoiding situations that an individual knows will stress or create anxiety for them. In order to cope or avoid such situations you can practice a breathing technique, destressing techniques such as exercises or simply self talk.

Exercises or physical activities are helpful de stressing the body and reducing anxiety overall. The tensions in the body can cause aches and pains that contribute to anxiety and negative feelings. Nevertheless, a common response to these pains is usually seeing a manual therapist such as massage therapists, chiropractors, osteopaths or physiotherapists.

What is Osteopathy?

Osteopathy is a type of alternative medicine that is drug-free and non-invasive manual therapy. It aims to improve health across all body systems by manipulating and strengthening the musculoskeletal framework. Manual medicine means that the treatment is assessed and carried out physically using the practitioners hands.

Dr Andrew Taylor Still the founder of Osteopathy emphasized the link between structure and function in the body and implemented it into his treatments.

Osteopathic treatments promote the body's natural tendency toward self-healing and health using 4 principles.

1. The body is a unit; the person is a unit of body, mind, and spirit.

2. The body is capable of self-regulation, self-healing, and health maintenance.
3. Structure and function are reciprocally interrelated.
4. Rational treatment is based upon an understanding of the basic principles of body unity, self-regulation, and the interrelationship of structure and function.

Still believed that the body “has within it everything that is needed for the maintenance of health and that the whole person is a unit of function including mind, body and spirit.” He focused on anatomy and pathology along with finely tuned palpation skills in order to help bring the body back to a state of equilibrium (Glossary of Osteopathic Terminology, 2011). An osteopathic manipulative therapy technique is chosen based on its physiological target for a particular disease. Techniques include joint mobilizations, soft tissue therapy, muscle energy techniques, low velocity low amplitude manipulations, counterstrain, myofascial release, cranial sacral, visceral manipulation, trigger point therapy, craniosacral, lymphatic drainage and many more. The goal is to promote the body's natural tendency toward self-healing and health.

Osteopathic Techniques

Osteopathic treatments involve gentle and non-invasive techniques that require minimal to no effort from the patient. Specific techniques may include: Soft tissue manipulation, positional release techniques, myofascial release, lymphatic drainage, osteopathic articular technique, visceral manipulation, muscle energy techniques, strain-counterstrain, cranio-sacral techniques, neuromuscular techniques, trigger point therapy in conjunction with other modalities the practitioner may specialize in. .

Techniques are chosen based on the individual patient and the symptoms they have reported. These techniques aim to reduce pain, improve movement and encourage blood flow. Osteopathy isn't usually painful, although it's common to feel sore or stiff in the first few days after treatment, particularly if you're having treatment for a painful or inflamed injury. You may be given advice on self-help and exercise to aid your recovery and prevent symptoms returning or getting worse (Nicholas S, 1974).

Referring back to the CBT techniques, osteopathy also uses relaxation techniques or strategies to help you learn how to relax your body which is a very helpful part of therapy. Since muscle tension and shallow breathing are both linked to stress and anxiety, manual osteopaths can use cranial sacral therapy to find a still point in the body and reset the flow.

Osteopathy and CBT

Many patients do not realize the effect anxiety or depression can have on their musculoskeletal system from tight muscles, headaches, difficulty breathing and poor posture. Pain can have a highly destructive impact on the psychological and social wellbeing of individuals, who commonly experience high levels of stress and struggle to self-manage. The physical agony is often not a standalone problem, however. 35% of people who suffer with low back pain are also diagnosed with depression, anxiety and social isolation (Saracutu, 2017). This leads many people to a massive pool of resources but with zero direction to the most effective solution. Mental health guidelines from CAMH suggest that chronic back pain sufferers should have physical therapy as part of a broader package of treatment which includes psychological help (A, Miller LR;Cano, 2008). But we have yet to explore how one single type of treatment can be used to treat both the physical and mental conditions.

A core component of CBT is to look into physical well-being. Since it has been scientifically proven that osteopathy can help decrease anxiety, bounceback coaches have recommended physical therapists as one of the allied therapies offered alongside their services. Osteopathy can work in combination with mental health services to help to reduce anxiety and its impact on the body. Treatments will typically involve addressing the body's overactive nervous system and the secondary flow on effects such as tight muscles, headaches, digestive issues and so on. You are also

given self help techniques or exercises you can include in your day to day life to reduce anxiety such as breathing exercises and postural correction advice (Edwards et al., 2018).

The Castro-Sanchez et al. is just one of the studies that give some promise for finding similar positive psychological effects with osteopathic manipulative therapy (OMT) interventions more generally for back and neck pain. Therefore, this is the aim of this study, to investigate whether OMT can reduce pain, anxiety, depression, fear avoidance and mental health dysfunction and improve quality-of-life dimensions where we hypothesise that they will (Edwards et al., 2018).

Furthermore, in the study by Saracutu et Al, a total of 16 randomized controlled trials were selected. Two out of five reported significant differences in depression; in regards to anxiety, all the four trials found significant effects; two out of three trials reported a significant reduction in fear avoidance while six out of seven trials found a significant enhancement of health status and three out of four found an increase in quality of life. The findings of this review are encouraging; suggesting that osteopathic treatment may have some effects on anxiety, fear avoidance, quality of life and general health status in populations living with persistent pain or aches.

The premise of CBT requires one to understand that everything is interconnected in the body, likewise to the 4 principles of Osteopathy. The similar philosophies, protocols and intentions in both therapies are undeniable and can clearly be placed hand in hand. There are numerous ways that CBT can help osteopathy or on the contrary. While CBT is a short term therapy, osteopathy can play a role in the long run. Osteopathy treatments can also be scheduled between the CBT sessions.

Bounceback coaches provide additional resources such as workbooks, guidance, feedback and aid in overcoming roadblocks. Positive reinforcement is provided in each session to ensure the participant is engaged and progressing. Positive advancement is tracked through questionnaires that assess mood, depressive symptoms, symptoms of anxiety and quality of life ratings. Low scores are addressed and more information is sought out to help with resolutions. To make an overall change you must begin to make a change in one of the following areas: thoughts, feelings, and physical symptoms and behaviour. This does not require the change to be good or bad. Whatever change you make to the unhelpful thought you make will contribute to other areas. For example: Kevin is stressed about paying his rent on time every month, he begins to drink every night due to physical symptoms of anxiety, insomnia and weakness. However, if he saw someone instead of drinking, perhaps an osteopath, he would feel better, be able to make a better judgement and avoid negative outcomes.

Conclusion

In present times, mental health is highly emphasized and related to bodily dysfunction or pains and aches. Depression, anxiety and mood disorders are distinctly related to psychological and physical well being, as well as taken into consideration when assessing medical conditions. Unfortunately, aches and pains are usually ignored until they begin to affect a patient mentally. Patients usually complain of interference with work, insomnia and a struggle to continue to complete a certain task. In this case they will see a physical therapist such as their massage therapist, physiotherapist, chiropractor or manual osteopath.

Bounceback coaches would initially perform an assessment to determine what area the participants should improve in. Three main categories include their feelings, thoughts and physical symptoms. Once established, the coach and participant create a plan on how to go about making that change. Those changes can include redirective thinking, increase in physical activity and engaging in self soothing activities. Osteopathy would play a role as a catalyst in physical activity and engagement in self soothing activities.

Although lack of relapse is not promised, chances of relapse may be minimized with a mental health fitness plan, where the patient will look for any triggers or warnings that may contribute to relapse. Engaging in behaviour that counteract these triggers such as physical activity or therapy will help reduce impact. For optimal results, it is best to integrate both CBT and osteopathy for physical and mental therapy and maintenance to avoid relapse to the full capacity. Ultimately, integrating CBT and osteopathy will also ease the pressure on therapists if they are the sole provider for the patient or participant.

It is recommended further research be conducted on osteopathy specifically playing a role during and after CBT treatments to be able to fully understand the advantages of such a treatment plan.

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