

Forskerlinjen

What works for whom in the treatment of anxiety disorders?

Introduction:

Psychological illness is a major source of disability and health problems. However, we have not found reliable psychological predictors of treatment outcomes. The critical question is: What works for whom? Are there some patients that can benefit more from one treatment compared to another?

Background:

Anxiety disorders are among the most prevalent and disabling psychological disorders worldwide. The disorder is persistent and leads to high economic and societal costs, quality of life impairments, premature mortality from suicide and self-starvation, as well as cardiovascular disease and other illnesses. Also in Norway, this disorder ranks among the most prevalent, disabling, and costly mental health challenges. The average effects of treatment modalities tend to be modest, though, and many patients do not seem to benefit from treatment.

New approaches to understand and treat psychological disorders are needed, with an emphasis on uncovering mechanisms of change and specific trajectories that are associated with successful outcomes. At the department of anxiety disorders at Modum Bad, two treatments are given: metacognitive therapy (MCT) and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Both treatments are associated with good outcomes, but MCT is superior post-treatment. Some studies from the department have investigated predictors of treatment outcome, but this sample has been relatively small. Hence, there is a need for larger studies with more statistical power.

Possible research questions:

What are reliable predictors of treatment outcomes?

Which psychological processes during pre-treatment moderates the effects of CBT and MCT?

Objectives and methods

Approximately 300 patients from the department of anxiety disorders at Modum Bad measured weekly during therapy.

The data will be analyzed using Mplus, SPSS, or R.

Students assignments

Review the literature.

Specify the final research questions and hypotheses to be examined.

Develop analytical skills and analyze data.

Submit a manuscript to a scientific journal.

At Modum Bad, present the research to clinicians.

About the research environment

The research project is part of the COPE research team.

<https://www.sv.uio.no/psi/english/research/groups/cope/>

Supervision:

COPE has lab meetings on a monthly basis. Regular individual supervision will be arranged.

The main supervisor is Sverre Urnes Johnson. A secondary supervisor will be appointed from the COPE group.

Ethical approvals and data:

The study has already received ethical approval, but the concrete project must be approved by Modum Bad's data protection officer.

Tentative article:

Predictors and moderators of treatment outcome in comorbid anxiety disorders

Contact:

Please feel free to contact Sverre Urnes Johnson at s.u.johnson@psykologi.uio.no for information or a discussion about the project.