

Psychological Treatments of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Advances and Future Challenges

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Over the past decades, there has been significant progress in the development of psychological treatments for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Several trauma-focused cognitive behavioural treatments for PTSD have been shown to be efficacious, and the effect size for symptom improvement with treatment has increased over the years. The presentation will review some of the research that informed the development of more effective treatments, using the example of cognitive therapy for PTSD (CT-PTSD; Ehlers & Clark, 2000).

Despite these advances, there remains room for improvement and a significant minority of patients only show modest benefits. Recent research has sought to better understand the psychological mechanisms of treatment effects. For example, trauma-focused psychological treatments have in common that they focus on the patients' memories of their traumatic events and the personal meanings (appraisals) of the trauma. Mediation analyses and latent growth curve analyses of changes over time showed that changes in appraisals and memory qualities drive symptom change.

A further challenge is that despite large-scale dissemination efforts, many people with PTSD are currently not able to access psychological treatments. Self-study assisted treatments and therapist-assisted internet-based treatments show promise and may play a role in solving this problem. A recent trial showed that the number of therapy sessions required to treat PTSD effectively CT-PTSD could be nearly halved by self-study modules that patients completed between sessions. The modules will be made available at <https://www.psy.ox.ac.uk/research/oxford-centre-for-anxiety-disorders-and-trauma>. A pilot study found that internet-delivered CT-PTSD may offer further improvement in the efficiency of treatment without loss of efficacy,