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Metacognitive therapy in the treatment of health anxiety: a pilot RCT

Robin Bailey

University of Central Lancashire, UK

In recent years metacognition has been shown to be strongly associated with both the maintenance and development of health anxiety. Metacognitive therapy (MCT) has demonstrated some effectiveness in the treatment of health anxiety however these studies are small and lack a control. The present study's aim was to compare the effectiveness of metacognitive therapy to a waitlist control condition in the treatment of health anxiety. Twenty individuals with health anxiety were randomly assigned to a waitlist condition or a maximum of twelve sessions of MCT. Primary measures of health anxiety and secondary measures of depression, anxiety and metacognitive beliefs were completed at pre and post treatment and 6 month follow up. The MCT group showed significantly greater improvements in health anxiety and related symptoms than the control group immediately after treatment, with high effect sizes on all measures. Eighty per cent of the MCT were recovered post treatment and at six month follow up. Evidence suggests that MCT is associated with large and clinically meaningful improvements in health anxiety and more general negative affect measures. Limitations and future directions will be discussed..

Biography

Robin Bailey is a Senior Lecturer in Counselling and Psychotherapy at the University of Central Lancashire. His area of expertise is in the role of metacognition in psychological conditions. He has collaborated for many years with the developer of metacognitive therapy Professor Adrian Wells, and worked towards developing treatments for anxiety disorders. He is also a practising Psychotherapist.

Rbailey@uclan.ac.uk

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