

Exposing Clinicians to Exposure: A Randomized Controlled Dissemination Trial of Exposure Therapy for Anxiety Disorders

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Highlights

We compared 3 technology-based methods of training clinicians in exposure therapy.

Online training (OLT) was sufficient to improve self-efficacy and clinical use.

Adding a motivational enhancement (ME) module to the OLT did not improve outcomes.

Further adding a learning community improved knowledge, attitudes, and proficiency.

Technology-based methods provide an effective and scalable way to train clinicians.

Abstract

Objective: The present study evaluated three technology-based methods of training mental health providers in exposure therapy (ET) for anxiety disorders. Training methods were designed to address common barriers to the dissemination of ET, including limited access to training, negative clinician attitudes toward ET, and lack of support during and following training.

Method: Clinicians naïve to ET ($N = 181$, $M_{age} = 37.4$, 71.3% female, 72.1% Caucasian) were randomly assigned to: 1) an interactive, multimedia online training (OLT), 2) OLT plus a brief, computerized motivational enhancement intervention (OLT + ME), or 3) OLT + ME plus a web-based learning community (OLT + ME + LC). Assessments were completed at baseline, post-training, and 6 and 12 weeks following training. Outcomes include satisfaction, knowledge, self-efficacy, attitudes, self-reported clinical use, and observer-rated clinical proficiency.

Results: All three training methods led to large and comparable improvements in self-efficacy and clinical use of ET, indicating that OLT alone was sufficient for improving these outcomes. The addition of the ME intervention did not significantly improve outcomes in comparison to

OLT alone. Supplementing the OLT with both the ME intervention and the LC significantly improved attitudes and clinical proficiency in comparison to OLT alone. The OLT + ME + LC condition was superior to both other conditions in increasing knowledge of ET.

Conclusions: Multi-component trainings that address multiple potential barriers to dissemination appear to be most effective in improving clinician outcomes. Technology-based training methods offer a satisfactory, effective, and scalable way to train mental health providers in evidence-based treatments such as ET.

Keywords: Dissemination; Online Training; Exposure Therapy; Anxiety Disorders