BOOK REVIEW

Online cognitive behavioral therapy: an e-mental health approach to depression and anxiety

This book aims to provide clinicians with information on the design and delivery of online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) interventions for depression and anxiety. Chapter 1 begins with a brief overview of the current problems with the availability of treatments for common mental health problems, including some of the cultural and financial barriers to accessing care, as well as issues with the insufficient, and inefficient, distribution of funding for mental healthcare. It outlines why the online delivery of therapy interventions may offer a range of benefits that may help to address these issues, and concludes with a brief summary of depression and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), which are the focus of later chapters. Chapter 2 provides guidance on designing online treatment modules, both in terms of content and how it is presented. The authors also offer guidance on delivering feedback as a therapist. The remainder of the book (chapters 3–14) then presents the content of a 12-module CBT intervention for depression and GAD used by the authors.

The book provides a good rationale for using online CBT programmes and the potential benefits this can have regarding access to treatment. The suggestions made for designing treatment modules are sensible, and there is a good focus on ways to build and maintain the therapeutic relationship online. While the module content presented will already be well known by CBT practitioners, the example messages from fictional clients are good, and the book encourages readers to write in their own responses, before presenting example responses from the therapist. This helps the reader to understand how the therapist and client communicate and work through treatment via this medium.

The reader may be expecting an overview of online CBT as a whole, so it should be emphasized that as the subtitle suggests, the book is outlining a single approach, which is helpful and interesting but at times can give the book a rather narrow and prescriptive feel. A rationale for the order of the 12 modules is not provided, and I would have liked to see discussion of whether and how the choice and order of modules could be tailored to the client, which is done in various other online programmes to increase efficiency and minimize drop-out. The authors state that they hope the book will allow clinicians to develop their own online interventions, although this may be difficult based solely on the information presented, which does not cover broader topics in the field, such as the extent and nature of therapist guidance, data security, or the monitoring and empirical evaluation of clinical outcomes.

Overall, although the scope of the book is limited, it does provide a helpful overview of why there is a role for online CBT interventions, and key principles of designing online therapy content. It may therefore be of use to those seeking a brief introduction to the topic, and an example of how the basic CBT principles and techniques might be presented in an online format.

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