

The Effectiveness of the Recovering from Child Abuse Programme (RCAP) for the Treatment of CPTSD: A Pilot Study

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Abstract : Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD) confers greater risk of poor outcomes than does Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Despite this, the current treatment guidelines for CPTSD aim to reduce only the 'core' symptoms of re-experiencing, hyper-vigilance and avoidance, while not addressing the Disturbances of Self Organisation (DSO) symptoms that distinguish this novel diagnosis from PTSD. The Recovering from Child Abuse Programme (RCAP) is a group protocol, based on the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Preliminary evidence suggests the program is effective at reducing DSO symptoms. This pilot study is the first to investigate the potential effectiveness of the RCAP for the specific treatment of CPTSD. This study was conducted as a service evaluation in a secondary care, traumatic stress service. Treatment was delivered once a week, in two-hour sessions, to ten existing female CPTSD patients of the service, who had experienced sexual abuse in childhood. The programme was administered by two therapists and two additional facilitators, following the RCAP protocol manual. Symptom severity was measured before the administration of therapy and was tracked across a range of measures (International Trauma Questionnaire; Patient Health Questionnaire; Community Assessment of Psychic Experience; Work and Social Adjustment Scale) at five time points, over the course of treatment. Qualitative appraisal of the programme was gathered via weekly feedback forms and from audio-taped recordings of verbal feedback given during group sessions. Preliminary results suggest the programme causes a slight reduction in CPTSD and depressive symptom severity and preliminary qualitative analysis suggests that the RCAP is both helpful and acceptable to group members. Final results and conclusions will follow completed thematic analysis of results.

Keywords : Child sexual abuse, Cognitive behavioural therapy, Complex post-traumatic stress disorder, Recovering from child abuse programme

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