

December
2015

Online Therapy USER Update

Online Therapy USER

The Online Therapy Unit for Service, Education, and Research (Online Therapy USER) is led by Dr. Heather Hadjistavropoulos from the University of Regina and makes use of online therapy programs that were initially developed in Australia.

The Online Therapy Unit allows trained therapists to provide Online Cognitive Behaviour Therapy to residents of Saskatchewan who have difficulties with depression, generalized anxiety, and/or panic. The Unit also provides education and training to diverse registered health professionals and students on how to deliver services online. This unit is also responsible for conducting research on how to best train therapists and deliver online-CBT in Saskatchewan.



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Director and Coordinator's Message

As the year is coming to an end, we would like to provide you with an update on what is new in the Online Therapy Unit for Service Education and Research (USER).

This year has been a busy year and we are excited to announce that everyone's hard work and dedication have paid off. We have hit a number of significant milestones. Our online screening process has taken off and we have now reached 1000 completed screens since our online screening was launched in November 2013! We have also exceeded our original target of offering treatment to 600 clients and are well on our way to 1000. We would like to thank everyone for their interest. Without you, we would not have been able to make this happen. We have included in this newsletter information on clients contacting the unit from November 2013 to July 2015.

This fall was exciting for the unit. We were happy to have the chance to have Dr. Nickolai Titov and his family here from Australia for a week. We hope that many of you had the opportunity to come hear him talk. Dr. Titov brings with him such a breadth of knowledge and experience. We consider ourselves lucky to have the opportunity to learn from him and obtain some new ideas for the future of online therapy in Saskatchewan. If you were unable to get away to hear one of his talks there is a recording available on our website at www.onlinetherapyuser.ca/media.

We have now started to take a look at the data we have collected from people that have taken part in the Wellbeing Course and we are happy with what we are seeing. Over the next few months, we will continue to look at the results so that we have a good picture of what the Wellbeing Course looks like in a Saskatchewan context. In this newsletter, we have included some preliminary analyses of treatment outcomes when we look at client's work status upon entry into the course.

In October, we again experienced some changes in the online therapy team. Marcie returned from her maternity leave and has been working hard getting resettled in her role as coordinator. We would like to thank Nichole for her hard work over the last year and are happy that she has decided to continue on with the unit in a different role.

Each year, the University closes down operations between Christmas and New Years and consequently the Online Therapy Unit will be closed at 3:00pm December 24th, 2015 and will reopen for regular hours January 4th, 2016.

With that, we wish you and yours a safe and happy holiday season from the Online Therapy Team. As always, please do not hesitate to let us know if you have any questions or concerns or would like any additional information.

Heather Hadjistavropoulos, Director, Online Therapy USER
Marcie Nugent, Coordinator, Online Therapy USER

A Randomized Controlled Trial of Internet-Delivered Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Individuals with Fibromyalgia

- Lindsay Friesen

The focus of this study was to assess the efficacy of Internet-delivered cognitive behaviour therapy (ICBT) for individuals with fibromyalgia (FM) who experience difficulties with pain, depression and or anxiety. The Pain Course for Fibromyalgia was offered to Canadians from January 2014 to January 2015. In this study, we were interested in the impact of the Pain Course for Fibromyalgia on FM symptoms, pain, depression and/or anxiety, and improving overall quality of life after the course.

The Pain Course for Fibromyalgia included topics of symptom identification, examining and challenging unhelpful thoughts, controlled breathing, pleasant activity scheduling, pacing, graded exposure, and relapse prevention. The course was administered to a randomized group of 30 individuals with FM and compared to a group of 30 individuals with FM who received standard care alone.

The findings were very encouraging. The results of this study showed that symptoms of FM, anxiety, and depression improved significantly from pre to post treatment. Participants also rated the course as highly acceptable and identified several course strengths

Results from this study indicate to health professionals that ICBT is a viable avenue to improve the clinical management and the health status of individuals with FM.

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USER to keep up-
dated on what's hap-
pening in the unit!

Follow us on
Twitter!



@TherapyUser



New Study Underway Examining Perceptions of Treatment Options for Severe Health Anxiety Among Primary Care Patients

- Joelle Soucy

Severe health anxiety is a psychological condition where individuals constantly worry that they have, or will develop, a serious medical illness, such as cancer. Normal sensations in the body (e.g., headaches) are mistaken as symptoms of the feared illness, which causes anxiety. Effective treatments for severe health anxiety exist yet many sufferers do not receive treatment suggesting that more accessible treatments should be offered. As such, online treatment programs have been developed that require limited therapist assistance. In particular, Internet-delivered cognitive behaviour therapy (ICBT) is an online treatment program that has been shown to successfully reduce severe health anxiety; however, because ICBT is a novel treatment, it remains unclear whether the service would be used if offered to clients.

We recently began a study to investigate clients' perceptions of ICBT in comparison to other treatments for severe health anxiety, including cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and medication.

In this study, participants will complete a battery of online questionnaires, including measures of health anxiety, general anxiety, depression, somatic concerns, and health care use. Three treatment vignettes will be presented online, each varying in their treatment description: medication, CBT, and ICBT. After the presentation of each vignette, a measure of perceived treatment acceptability will be administered. Furthermore, participants will be asked to rank the three treatments based on the likelihood of agreeing to receive that intervention for health anxiety. Findings from this study may provide important insight into the perceived acceptability of treatment for severe health anxiety.

For more information or to participate in the study, please contact Joelle Soucy by phone (306-585-5369) or email (Soucy20j@uregina.ca).



To Find Out More
About Online
Therapy in
Saskatchewan

Call: 306-337-3331

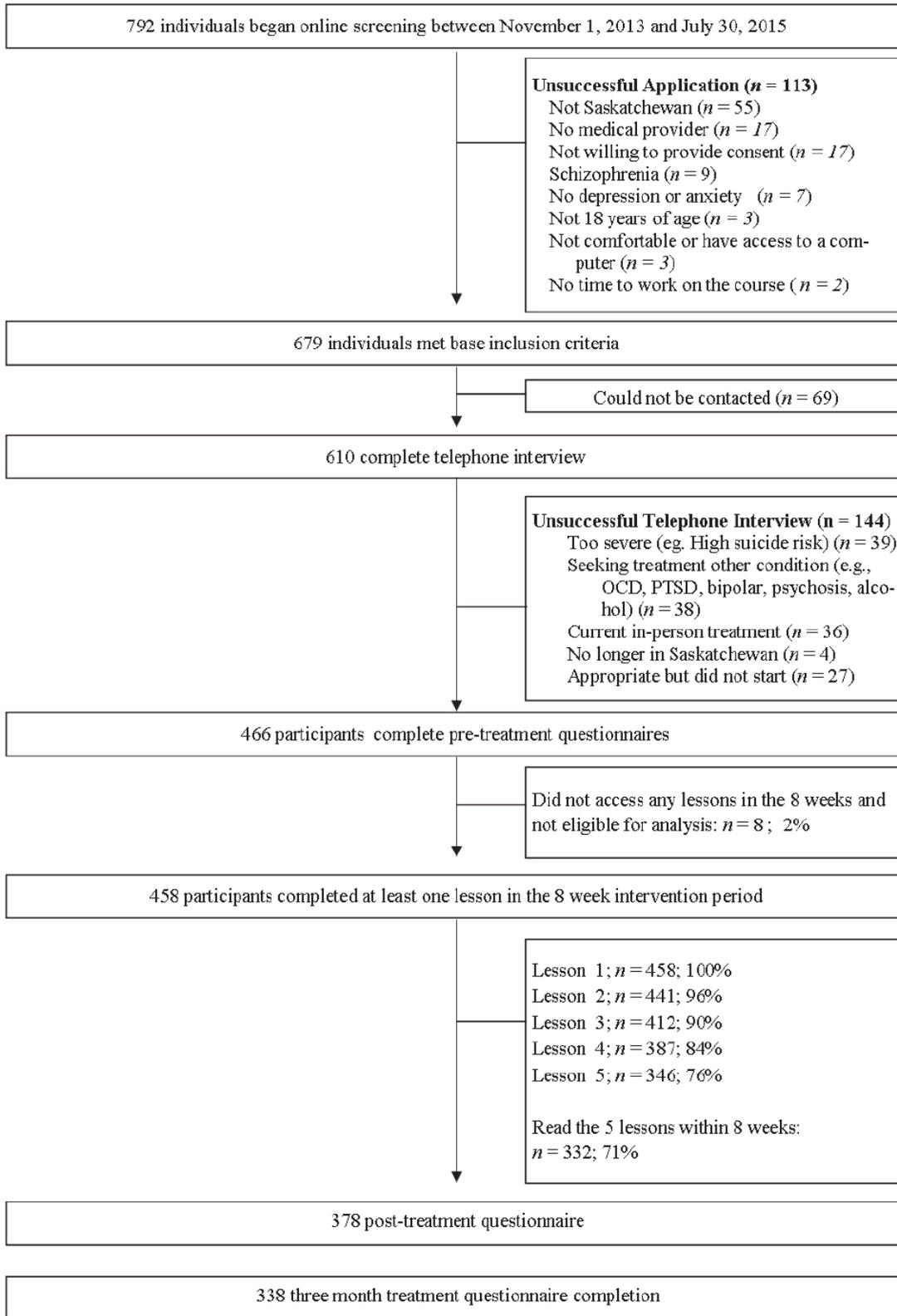
Email:

Online.Therapy.User@uregina.ca

You can also view a video that describes the Wellbeing Course by visiting www.onlinetherapyuser.ca

You can also register online now if you want your name on our contact list.

Overview of Reach of Online Therapy Unit Between November 1, 2014 and July 30, 2015



How to advertise in your community

For promotional material to post in your community (e.g. Physician offices, public libraries, etc), contact Marcie for materials that you can distribute.

Marcie.Nugent@uregina.ca
or phone (306) 337-3331.

USER staff can also help you if you want to contact your local media to inform them of the service - newspapers, radio, television.

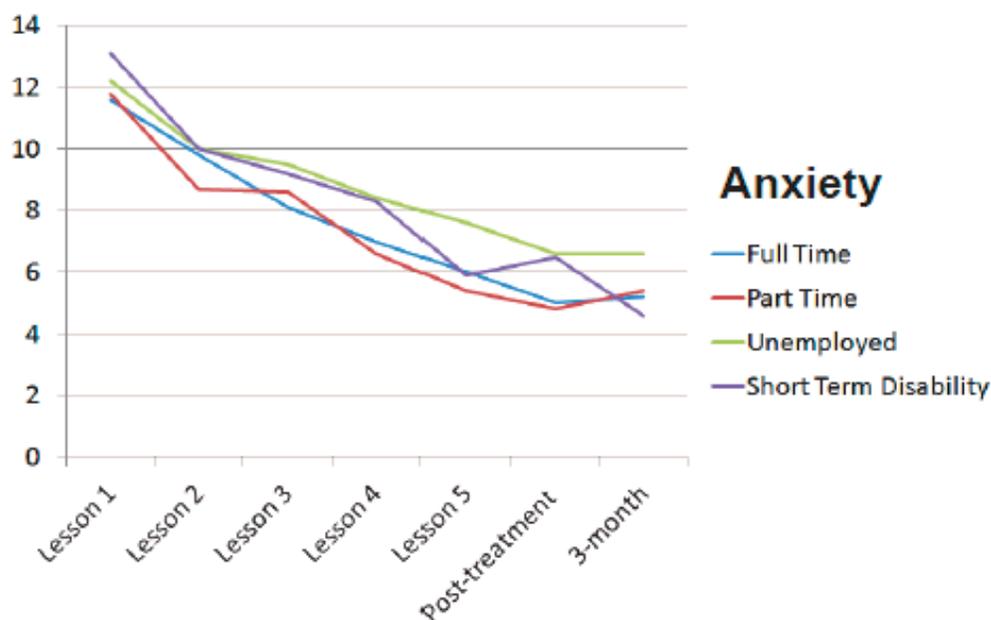
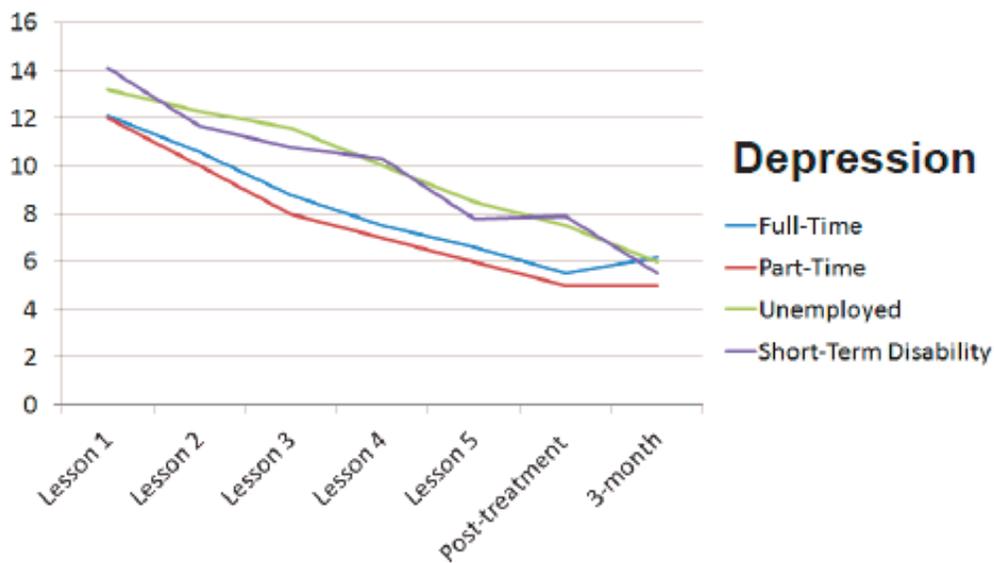
Reminder:

Anyone on a waitlist for in-person therapy can be referred to the Wellbeing Course. This is a great way for clients to learn cognitive behavioural skills before seeing a therapist in-person.

ICBT Outcomes Based on Employment

Category	Pre-treatment	Post-treatment	% Course Completion
Full-time	n = 242	n = 192	79.3%
Part-time	n = 54	n = 44	81.5%
Unemployed	n = 40	n = 29	72.5%
Short-term disability	n = 44	n = 40	90.9%

COURSE COMPLETION RATES ARE VERY GOOD FOR ALL PATIENTS, BUT PATIENTS ON SHORT-TERM DISABILITY HAVE PARTICULARLY HIGH COURSE COMPLETION RATES



Is Online Therapy for You?

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Are you a Saskatchewan resident?
- Do you have access to a computer and printer in a space where you could work on the Wellbeing Course online?
- Do you have Internet access in a private space?
- Do you feel comfortable using the Internet and writing emails?
- Do you have symptoms of Generalized Anxiety, Panic, and/or Depression?

If you answered "Yes" to all of the above questions, then you may qualify to participate in Online Therapy.



Predicting Response to Therapist-Assisted Internet-Delivered Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Depression or Anxiety within an Open Dissemination Trial

- **Heather Hadjistavropoulos, Nicole Pugh, Hugo Hesser, and Gerhard Andersson (recently published in Behavior Therapy)**

Therapist-assisted Internet-delivered cognitive behavior therapy (ICBT) is efficacious for treating anxiety and depression, but predictors of response to treatment when delivered in clinical practice are not well understood. In this study, we explored demographic, clinical, and program variables that predicted modules started and symptom improvement (i.e., Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 or Patient Health Questionnaire-9 total scores over pre-, mid-, and post-treatment) within one of our previously published open dissemination trials (Hadjistavropoulos et al., 2014). The sample consisted of 195 patients offered 12 modules of therapist-assisted ICBT for depression or generalized anxiety; ICBT was delivered by therapists working in six geographically dispersed clinics. Consistent across ICBT for depression or generalized anxiety, starting fewer modules was associated with more phone calls from therapists reflecting that therapists tended to call patients who did not start modules as scheduled. Also consistent for both ICBT programs, greater pre-treatment condition severity and completion of more modules was associated with superior ICBT-derived benefit. Other predictors of response to treatment varied across the two programs. Younger age, lower education, taking psychotropic medication, being in receipt of psychiatric care and lower comfort with written communication were associated with either fewer program starts or lower symptom improvement in one of the two programs. It was concluded that monitoring response to ICBT may be particularly important in patients with these characteristics. Research directions were discussed.

To participate in online therapy in Saskatchewan, visit:

www.onlinetherapyuser.ca

1. Complete online screening located on the website.
2. Receive an email confirmation that your online screening has been received and request an appointment time to speak with staff on the phone.
3. Take part in a telephone conversation with a Unit staff member to discuss if the Wellbeing Course or if another treatment method would best meet your needs at this time.

Online Therapy
USER
Community
Partners

Current Partners

- Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region
- Saskatoon Health Region
- Five Hills Health Region
- Sun Country Health Region
- Cypress Health Region
- Prince Albert Parkland Health Region
- Kelsey Trail Health Region
- HealthLine
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Health

Recent Online Therapy Unit Publications:

- Alberts, N.M., Hadjistavropoulos, H.D., Dear, B.F., & Titov, N. (in press). Transdiagnostic internet-delivered cognitive-behaviour therapy for cancer survivors in the re-entry phase: A feasibility trial. *Psycho-Oncology*.
- Dirkse, D., Hadjistavropoulos, H. D., Hesser, H., & Barak, A. (2015). Linguistic analysis of communication in therapist-assisted internet-delivered cognitive behavior therapy for generalized anxiety disorder. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, 44*, 21-32.
- Hadjistavropoulos, H. D., Pugh, N., Hesser, H., & Andersson, G. (in press). Predicting symptom Improvement in therapist-assisted Internet-delivered cognitive behavior therapy for depression and anxiety within an open dissemination trial. *Behavior Therapy*.
- Hollandare, F., Gustafsson, S. A., Berglind, M., Grape, F., Carlbring, P., Andersson, G., Hadjistavropoulos, H. & Tillofors, M. (2016). Therapist behaviours in internet-based cognitive behaviour therapy for depressive symptoms. *Internet Interventions, 3*, 1-7.
- Jones, S. L., Hadjistavropoulos, H. D., & Soucy, J. N. (2016). A randomized controlled trial of guided internet cognitive behaviour therapy for older adults with generalized anxiety. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 37*, 1-9.

Is Online Cognitive Behaviour Therapy right for everyone?

The support provided through online therapy is not appropriate for all clients.

Online therapy is not appropriate for clients who:

- Report plans to harm oneself or others
- Have recently harmed themselves or others
- Report delusions or hallucinations
- Are experiencing mania or hypomania
- Report primary problems with drugs or alcohol

Clients who are not appropriate candidates for Online Therapy are referred to other services.



Online Therapy Unit Team

Principal Investigator: Heather Hadjistavropoulos (Psychology U of R)

Coordinator: Marcie Nugent (Psychology U of R)

Co-investigators: Cory Butz (Computer Science U of R), Greg Marchildon (Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy U of R), Thomas Hadjistavropoulos (Psychology U of R), Nuelle Novik (Social Work U of R), Gil White (Medicine U of S)

International Collaborators: Nick Titov & Blake Dear, Macquaire University, Sydney Australia; Gerhard Andersson, Linköping University, Linköping, Sweden

Provincial Collaborators: Kathy Willerth, Lorne Sier, Saskatchewan Health Dave Nelson, Saskatchewan Division, Canadian Mental Health Association

Online Therapy Unit Staff/Students: Annora Bourgeault, Dale Dirkse, Nichole Faller, Lindsay Friesen, Kim Larson, Marcie Nugent, Tori Owens, Nicole Pugh, Luke Schneider, Joelle Soucy, Nicole Alberts

Web Development Team: Max Ivanov, Saqib Noman, Rachel Poppa, Eden Rohatensky

Online Therapy Unit Volunteers: Aeliesha Brooks, Kadie Hozempa, Shannon Kydd, Kat Mazenc, Priya Pamar, Lindsay Shumay, Casie Chang

Student Therapists: Michelle Apps, Lucie Chursinoff, Dale Dirkse, Michelle Dunn, Sophie Duranceau, Nichole Faller, Lindsay Friesen, Sheila Georget, Laura Hildebrand, Samantha Horswill, Sarah Ivens, Kristie Kennedy, Daniel Lebouthillier, Karmen Pearce, Luke Schneider, Sabine Soltani, Joelle Soucy, Kristie Walker, Kimberley Wolbaum-Geiger, Kim Zorn

Registered Providers: Orest Baron, Sarah Chan, Patty Crassweller, Chelsea Delparte, Carolyn Van Dyck, Sheryl Fehr, Erin Fogarty, Haley Francis, Cam Friesen, Barbara Golden, Hema Harrison, Breann Heatherington, Mike Hodson, Amy Janzen – Claude, Dawna Karalash, Wendy Martin, Cara McDavid, Rosalie Meyer, Ruth Mireau, Shahlo Mustafaeva, Deanna Nilson, Nuelle Novik, Joan Ortman, Katherine Owens, Margaret Ralston, Kavita Ram, Jai Richards, JoAnne Salido, Sheila Szakacs, Kim Tucker, Shane Vandenameele, Victoria Walton, Meghan Woods



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Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF; \$120,000)