

Title: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Insomnia - an initial clinical study

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Study Objectives: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for adult chronic insomnia.

Intervention: 14 chronic insomnia sufferers (mean age 46±9yrs) including 8 females & 6 males attended a one day workshop involving 7 hours of ACT for insomnia training followed by 6 scheduled bi-weekly support emails. All participants rated themselves as experiencing 'moderate to severe clinical insomnia' as scored by the Insomnia Severity Index (ISI) – mean score 21±4.

During the workshop the participants learnt key ACT tools such as acceptance, mindfulness, defusion, valued living and committed action, as well as basic sleep education to create their own personal sleep plan to implement over the coming year.

Measurements and Results: Assessments were completed 1 week pre workshop and then at 5 and 10 weeks and 6 and 12 months post workshop. Sleep outcomes were appraised by sleep diary, ISI, and the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI). Attendees also completed an Acceptance and Action Questionnaire for Insomnia (AAQI), as well as a Mindfulness Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS).

Participants reported significant improvements in self reported sleep measurements across all assessments during the year with an increase in total sleep time (TST), sleep onset latency (SOL) and wakefulness after sleep onset (WASO). Significant changes were also reported in ISI, PSQI, AAQI and MAAS scores.

Conclusion: This initial clinical study suggests ACT to be an effective treatment for overcoming chronic insomnia. ACT seeks to improve sleep quality by increasing people's willingness to experience the conditioned physiological and psychological discomfort commonly reported, whilst promoting valued based living. It offers an alternative approach to traditional Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for insomnia (CBT-I). Further research is needed to establish the full potential of this new contextual behavior therapy.