

A Randomized Clinical Trial on Cognitive-Behavioral Group Therapy and Sertraline in the Treatment of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Marcelo B. Sousa, M.D., M.Sc.; Luciano R. Isolan, M.D.; Renata R. Oliveira, M.D.; Gisele G. Manfro, M.D., Ph.D; and Aristides V. Cordioli, M.D, Ph.D.

Abstract

Background: Cognitive-behavioral group therapy (CBGT) and serotonin-reuptake inhibitors (SRI) have proven efficacy in reducing symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). There is no consensus about which of these forms of treatment is more effective. This study was conducted to evaluate the efficacy of CBGT as compared to that of sertraline in reducing OCD symptoms.

Method: Fifty-six outpatients with an OCD diagnosis, according to DSM-IV criteria, participated in the randomized clinical trial: 28 taking 100 mg/day of sertraline and 28 undergoing group cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) for 12 weeks. Efficacy of treatments was rated according to the reduction in scores on the Yale-Brown Obsessive-Compulsive Scale (Y-BOCS) and the Clinical Global Impression (CGI) scales.

Results: Both treatments were effective, although patients treated with CBGT obtained a mean Y-BOCS reduction of 43%, while those treated with sertraline obtained only a 28% reduction ($p = 0.039$). CBGT was also significantly more effective in reducing the intensity of compulsions ($p = 0.030$). Further, eight patients (32%) treated with CBGT presented a complete

remission of OCD symptoms (Y-BOCS \leq 8) as compared to only one (4%) among those who received sertraline ($p = 0.023$).

Conclusion: CBGT and sertraline have shown to be effective in reducing OCD symptoms. Nevertheless, the degree of improvement, intensity reduction of compulsions, and percentage of patients who obtained full remission were significantly higher in patients treated with CBGT.

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