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TEO: An Online Emotional Therapy System to Apply Homework Assignments in the Treatment of Adjustment Disorders

Soledad Quero^{a,c,1}, Cristina Botella^{a,c}, M^a Angeles Pérez-Ara^a, Sabrina Andreu-Mateu^a, Rosa María Baños^{b,c} and Diana Castilla^a

^aUniversidad Jaume I

^bUniversidad de Valencia

^cde Fisiopatología de la Obesidad y Nutrición (CIBEROBN)

¹*Corresponding author:*

Soledad Quero

Universidad Jaume I

Facultad de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Departamento de Psicología Básica

Clínica y Psicobiología

Av. Vicente Sos Baynat s/n

12071 Castellón de la Plana

Spain

E-mail: squero@psb.uji.es

Abstract

Adjustment Disorders (AD) are a very important public health problem. Regarding its treatment, only a series of general guidelines are available. Our research team has developed a cognitive-behavioral treatment (CBT) supported by Virtual Reality (VR) that has shown its utility in the treatment of AD. A CBT approach gives a crucial role to homework assignments. So far, studies that use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for

psychological treatments have been centered on how to use the technologies to deliver treatment within the therapeutic context. No study is available in the literature that uses ICT to apply homework assignments. Therefore, in the present work we pretend to go one step beyond and join the use of the VR EMMA system within the therapy sessions, with the use of other ICT to apply homework assignments between sessions in the treatment of AD. TEO is a completely open Online Emotional Therapy system based on Web technology that allows, in a simple and effective way, to create personalized therapeutic material to present to the patient over the Internet. The aim of the present work is to describe the TEO system and the study that is being conducted to test its efficacy and efficiency.

Keywords: Cognitive-behavioral Treatment, Online Therapy, Internet, Homework Assignments, Adjustment Disorder

Introduction

The diagnosis of Adjustment Disorders (AD) is very popular among clinicians [1] and is an important public health problem [2]. However, regarding its treatment, only a series of general guidelines are available [3]. Our research team has developed a cognitive-behavioral treatment (CBT) which is supported by Virtual Reality (VR) and also includes positive psychology strategies [4]. Preliminary data about its utility is already available [5].

A CBT approach gives a crucial role to homework assignments from the very beginning. However, studies so far that use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for psychological treatments have been centered on how to use the technologies to deliver treatment within the therapeutic context. This is the case for EMMA, the VR system used in the aforementioned studies. EMMA is a VR adaptive display that adapts its presentation to the patient's therapeutic needs, with the main objective of reflecting and evoking emotional responses in them to allow emotional processing to occur.

As far as we know, there is no study that uses ICT to apply homework assignments. Therefore, in the present work we pretend to go one step beyond, and combine the use of the VR EMMA system within the therapy sessions in the consulting room (which has already showed its utility), with the use of other ICT to apply homework assignments in the treatment of AD. It implies the transfer of ICT to the patient's home – the homework the patient has to do between

sessions is also important. TEO is a completely open Online Emotional Therapy system based on Web technology that allows, in a simple and effective way, to create personalized therapeutic material to present to the patient over the Internet (<http://www.psicologiaytecnologia.es/teo>). The aim of the present work is to describe the TEO system and the study that is being conducted to test its efficacy.

Method

In order to compare the differential efficacy and efficiency of two different ways of applying homework assignments in the treatment of AD, a between group study with two experimental conditions will be used: 1) Homework assignments using the TEO system and; 2) Homework assignments in the traditional way (material reading and writing tasks). Participants will be randomly assigned to each of the experimental conditions. The assessment protocol will include different efficacy outcome measures (therapeutic goals, AD specific questionnaires, interference measures) and satisfaction with the treatment measures.

Results

Work in progress.

Conclusion

This is the first time that a homework assignments component that can be completely self-administered over the Internet has been developed. TEO will permit the creation and administration of assessment and treatment protocols to be completely personalized; each session will be adapted to the patient's needs. Furthermore, because it is based on the Web it will increase the possibilities for therapy – it can be used in blended mode (complementing the therapy), or in tele-assistance mode (being the own self-administered therapy).

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L2L European Project: A Serious Game for Leadership Training

M^a Angeles Pérez-Ara^a, Soledad Quero^{a,c,1}, Cristina Botella^{a,c}, Juana Bretón-López^a and Rosa María Baños^{b,c}

^aUniversidad Jaume I

^bUniversidad de Valencia

^cde Fisiopatología de la Obesidad y Nutrición (CIBEROBN)

¹*Corresponding author:*

Soledad Quero
Universidad Jaume I
Facultad de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales
Departamento de Psicología Básica
Clínica y Psicobiología
Av. Vicente Sos Baynat s/n
12071 Castellón de la Plana, Spain
E-mail: squero@psb.uji.es

Abstract

Effective leaders manage the underlying group dynamics in ways that help the team meet its objectives. Leaders need people management skills, resource management and organization. Despite the offer of leadership skills training programs, effective and valid training in these areas is scarce and it is usually available only in master programs of high quality or large corporations. The Learn 2 Lead (L2L) Project consortium has designed and developed a leadership skills training online game that aims to increase the availability of these programs as well as give people a more active role in the learning process. The aim of this work is to describe both the serious game and the research design to be used in order to test the efficacy of the game in leadership training. The training is going to be applied in two different modes: 1) online self-administered mode; and 2) blended mode. A