

EABCT 2023 Workshop: Cognitive Therapy for PTSD

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Background

International treatment guidelines recommend of *Cognitive Therapy for PTSD* as a first-line treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The treatment has been shown to be highly effective and acceptable to adults and young people. Ehlers and Clark's (2000) cognitive model of PTSD guides treatment. This model suggests that people with PTSD perceive a serious current internal or external threat that has two sources, excessively negative appraisals (personal meanings) of the trauma and / or its sequelae and characteristics of trauma memories that lead to reexperiencing symptoms. The problem is maintained by cognitive strategies (such as thought suppression, rumination, safety-seeking behaviours) that are intended to reduce the sense of current threat but maintain the problem by preventing change in the appraisals and trauma memory, and/or lead to increases in symptoms.

Cognitive Therapy for PTSD has three goals. First, the idiosyncratic personal meanings are identified and changed. Therapeutic techniques include identification of hot spots during the trauma and associated meanings, Socratic questioning, and behavioural experiments. Second, the trauma memory is elaborated. Idiosyncratic personal meanings of the trauma are linked with information that makes them less threatening, using a range of techniques. In stimulus discrimination training, the patient learns to discriminate triggers of reexperiencing symptoms from the stimuli that were present during the trauma. Third, the patient experiments with dropping maintaining behaviours.

Key Learning Objectives

Participants will learn how to

- develop a personalised version of the treatment model with patients
- update trauma memories
- help clients trigger discrimination
- work with different cognitive themes

Training Modalities

Presentation with video illustrations

Workshop Leader

Anke Ehlers is a Wellcome Trust Principal Research Fellow and Professor of Experimental Psychopathology at the Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford, UK. She has received several international awards for her work on posttraumatic stress disorder, including the Award for Distinguished Scientific Contributions to Clinical Psychology, American Psychological Association and the Wilhelm Wundt-William James Award, awarded jointly by the European Federation of Psychology Associations and the American Psychological Foundation.

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