Exposure therapy: rethinking the model-refining the method

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Abstrak

Exposure therapy is one of the most robust and most effective standard procedures among the behavioral psychotherapy variants. Initially frequently used as a stand-alone treatment particular for anxiety disorders, it is nowadays typically used in the context of a conceptually wider framework of cognitive-behavioral therapies (CBT) in a variety of formats and techniques. Over the past two decades and as a result of the increasing emphasis on cognitive factors, however, exposure therapy and its core principles have also become increasingly diffuse. Being usually embedded in complex CBT procedures, and frequently used interchangeably with the term cognitive-behavior therapy, principles and unique procedures of exposure therapy appear to be more and more confuse, particularly when conceptually important boundaries between cognitive, affective, and behavioral components in the process of intervention have become blurred. We feel that this development is threatening to the integrity of exposure therapy as a scientifically based, highly effective psychological treatment approach. Also see the risk that the apparent lack of attention devoted to exposure therapy and its foundations might result in a deterioration of the effectiveness of behavioral psychotherapies.