Plain English summary

The FACTOID feasibility study
Health Technology Assessment 2021; Vol. 25: No. 54
DOI: 10.3310/hta25540

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk
Plain English summary

Generalised anxiety disorder, characterised by a tendency to worry, is the most common anxiety disorder among older people. Those with this condition may experience other difficulties, including increased distress and disability, poorer coping and reduced quality of life. Medication and talking therapy are usually offered as forms of treatment, but many do not find them helpful. Guidance is lacking on how to help older people manage generalised anxiety disorder when it does not respond to such treatments.

We developed a 16-session intervention specifically for older people with treatment-resistant generalised anxiety disorder. This was based on acceptance and commitment therapy: a form of talking therapy that helps people to learn how to best live with distressing experiences while still doing things that really matter to them. It may be particularly suited to older people because many older people experience difficulties with chronic ill health and other problems that cannot be easily improved with conventional talking therapies.

We developed our intervention by asking 15 older people about their experiences of treatment-resistant generalised anxiety disorder and treatments they have received for it, as well as what might help or hinder their engagement with talking therapy. We combined their guidance with advice from 36 clinicians to ensure that our intervention was tailored to the needs of this population. We then asked the same 15 older people, our Service User Advisory Group and academic clinicians about how we could optimise our intervention. We also conducted an online survey of service users and clinicians to clarify what care older people with generalised anxiety disorder are typically offered and receive.

We tested how acceptable our intervention was to 37 older people with treatment-resistant generalised anxiety disorder, and how feasible it was to deliver within the NHS. We found evidence that it was acceptable to participants, that it could be delivered within the NHS and that its value for money could be tested in a larger study. We also found evidence suggestive of improvements in anxiety, depression and coping.

There were some limitations of our study. However, overall, our results suggest that we should conduct a larger study to find out whether or not our intervention is helpful for older people with treatment-resistant generalised anxiety disorder.
Criteria for inclusion in the Health Technology Assessment journal

Reports are published in Health Technology Assessment (HTA) if (1) they have resulted from work for the HTA programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

Reviews in Health Technology Assessment are termed ‘systematic’ when the account of the search appraisal and synthesis methods (to minimise biases and random errors) would, in theory, permit the replication of the review by others.

HTA programme

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) research is undertaken where some evidence already exists to show that a technology can be effective and this needs to be compared to the current standard intervention to see which works best. Research can evaluate any intervention used in the treatment, prevention or diagnosis of disease, provided the study outcomes lead to findings that have the potential to be of direct benefit to NHS patients. Technologies in this context mean any method used to promote health; prevent and treat disease; and improve rehabilitation or long-term care. They are not confined to new drugs and include any intervention used in the treatment, prevention or diagnosis of disease.

The journal is indexed in NHS Evidence via its abstracts included in MEDLINE and its Technology Assessment Reports inform National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance. HTA research is also an important source of evidence for National Screening Committee (NSC) policy decisions.

This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 15/161/05. The contractual start date was in May 2017. The draft report began editorial review in December 2019 and was accepted for publication in August 2020. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

© 2021 Gould et al. This work was produced by Gould et al. under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This is an Open Access publication distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 4.0 licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, reproduction and adaption in any medium and for any purpose provided that it is properly attributed. See: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

For attribution the title, original author(s), the publication source – NIHR Journals Library, and the DOI of the publication must be cited.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Prepress Projects Ltd, Perth, Scotland (www.prepress-projects.co.uk).
NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

Professor Ken Stein  Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editors

Professor John Powell  Chair of HTA and EME Editorial Board and Editor-in-Chief of HTA and EME journals. Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK, and Professor of Digital Health Care, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, UK

Professor Andrée Le May  Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals) and Editor-in-Chief of HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals

Professor Matthias Beck  Professor of Management, Cork University Business School, Department of Management and Marketing, University College Cork, Ireland

Dr Tessa Crilly  Director, Crystal Blue Consulting Ltd, UK

Dr Eugenia Cronin  Senior Scientific Advisor, Wessex Institute, UK

Dr Peter Davidson  Consultant Advisor, Wessex Institute, University of Southampton, UK

Ms Tara Lamont  Senior Scientific Adviser (Evidence Use), Wessex Institute, University of Southampton, UK

Dr Catriona McDaid  Senior Research Fellow, York Trials Unit, Department of Health Sciences, University of York, UK

Professor William McGuire  Professor of Child Health, Hull York Medical School, University of York, UK

Professor Geoffrey Meads  Emeritus Professor of Wellbeing Research, University of Winchester, UK

Professor James Raftery  Professor of Health Technology Assessment, Wessex Institute, Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, UK

Dr Rob Riemsma  Reviews Manager, Kleijnen Systematic Reviews Ltd, UK

Professor Helen Roberts  Professor of Child Health Research, UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, UK

Professor Jonathan Ross  Professor of Sexual Health and HIV, University Hospital Birmingham, UK

Professor Helen Snooks  Professor of Health Services Research, Institute of Life Science, College of Medicine, Swansea University, UK

Professor Ken Stein  Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

Professor Jim Thornton  Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, UK

Please visit the website for a list of editors: www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors

Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk