

“TRANSDIAGNOSTIC” THEORY AND PRACTICE - EATING DISORDERS OR EATING DISORDER?

Presenter

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Abstract

If one thinks afresh about eating disorders and their psychopathology, two observations are particularly striking: first, the DSM-IV eating disorders have many features in common; and second, patients frequently migrate between them. This suggests that there are mechanisms that lock people into having an eating disorder but not a particular eating disorder. If this view is correct, treatments that address these mechanisms should be effective with all forms of eating disorder rather than just one. We have developed and tested such a “transdiagnostic” treatment (enhanced CBT; CBT-E).

Data from a recently completed trial suggest that CBT-E is an effective treatment for those patients with an eating disorder who are not markedly underweight, whatever their eating disorder diagnosis. In this presentation new data will be presented on the effectiveness of CBT-E in treating all eating disorder patients, including those who are markedly underweight, thereby testing whether CBT-E is truly a transdiagnostic treatment.

The presentation will include consideration of the theoretical and clinical significance of these findings.

Recommended reading

- Fairburn, C.G. (2008). *Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Eating Disorders*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Fairburn, C.G., Cooper, Z., & Shafran, R. (2003). Cognitive behaviour therapy for eating disorders: A “transdiagnostic” theory and treatment. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, *41*, 509-528.
- Fairburn, C.G., Cooper, Z., Doll, H.A., O’Connor, M.E., Bohn, K., Hawker, D.M., Wales, J.A., & Palmer, R.L. (2009). Transdiagnostic cognitive behavioral therapy for patients with eating disorders: A two-site trial with 60-week follow-up. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *166*, 311-319.

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Biography

Professor Christopher Fairburn is Wellcome Principal Research Fellow and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Oxford. He has a well established international reputation for his research on the nature and treatment of eating disorders. He has a particular interest in the development and evaluation of psychological treatments and is especially well known for his development of the cognitive behavioural approach to the treatment of eating disorders.

Professor Fairburn is also a Governor of the Wellcome Trust, the largest international biomedical research foundation.