

The Effectiveness of ACT for Improving Wellbeing and Psychological Flexibility Among Employees in a Hospital Setting

Josh Hope-Bell, Dr. Olivia Donnelly, Fabio Zuchelli, Dr. Nic Hooper and Lois Coy
Correspondence: joshua.hope-bell@uwe.ac.uk, olivia.donnelly@nbt.nhs.uk

Introduction

It is well documented that high levels of occupational stress is a prevalent issue for many health-care professionals³. This can have a knock-on effect on service provision, as well as staff quality of life⁴.

Numerous stress producing factors are often inherent in the very nature of health care work, including organisational conflicts, a high workload and contact with suffering or dying patients³. Subsequently, there is a need for initiatives that focus on supporting staff to develop their psychological coping strategies and self-care skills².

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a training course based on ACT in improving stress and wellbeing among employees in a hospital setting.

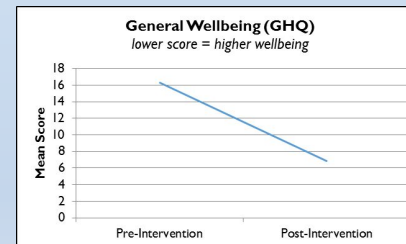
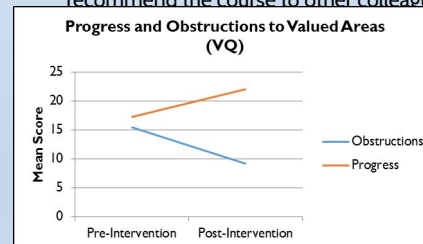
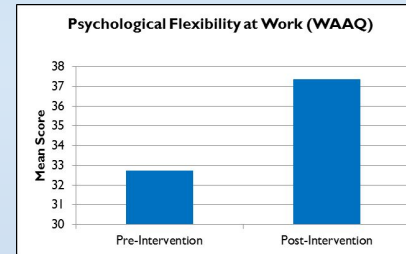
Methods

- The content of the intervention was based on a protocol developed by Paul Flaxman, which has previously been demonstrated to improve staff wellbeing and productivity¹. The course consisted of 3 weekly 3-hour group sessions, facilitated by an experienced clinical psychologist.
- The content covered various ACT principles and practices, including values clarification, mindfulness exercises and ACT metaphors.
- Recruitment was by self-selection in response to an advertisement about the course in the staff bulletin.
- Outcome measures administered pre- and post-intervention included: General Health Questionnaire (GHQ), Valuing Questionnaire (VQ) and the Work Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ).
- A feedback form was given to provide greater insight into the participant's experience of the course.

Results

Over the period of February – June 2017, 90 staff from North Bristol NHS registered their interest and 4 courses were completed. 32 (4 male and 28 female,) staff completed the training, and 29 complete data sets were collected.

- T-test comparisons showed statistically significant improvements across all measures from pre- to post- intervention ($p < 0.01$).
- Qualitative feedback indicated that participants experienced positive changes in their wellbeing and were engaging with the ACT approach (see right).
- All staff who completed the feedback form ($n=21$) indicated that they would recommend the course to other colleagues.



References

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Many thanks to Paul Flaxman for his generosity in sharing his ideas, resources, and enthusiasm, all of which underpin this

study.

"This course has helped me tremendously; on an individual basis and ideas to raise forward in work"



"This course has enabled me to become a less stressed, more productive person at home and work"

"I feel I have more control over what I do and am more patient and less anxious, especially over things that are out of my control!"

"Pay more attention to my 'passengers' ...realising that I can do things despite doubts that I might have"

Conclusion

Initial findings display an improvement on all three outcome measures post-intervention, suggesting that attending the ACT training course resulted in improvements to staff general wellbeing and psychological flexibility. This conclusion is supported by the qualitative feedback gathered.

Future Research

- This project is ongoing. Subsequently, ~10 further pre- and post- intervention data sets will be included in the final analysis, along with 3-month follow up questionnaires.
- Semi-structured interviews exploring the process and impact of taking part will also be completed and examined using thematic analysis.
- The low attendance of staff who were under-represented in the sample (including senior management, medics, and male staff) could be explored, along with ways to tailor recruitment / the approach to better meet their needs.
- Future research would benefit from the inclusion of a control group.