

# Effectiveness of a 10-week Pilot Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Group for Social Anxiety Disorder: Results from an Acute Care General Hospital

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## Aims

To examine the effectiveness, in a typical outpatient setting, of an ACT group protocol that was previously shown to be effective for Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) in an RCT.

## Introduction

- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) has been shown to be an effective treatment for Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)
- One non RCT group-based ACT study found treatment to be effective (Ossman et al., 2006)
- A 1:1 ACT open trial (Dalrymple and Herbert, 2007) and 2 RCTs (Craske, et al. 2014, and Niles et al., 2014) have also shown benefits, the latter two comparing ACT to CBT
- To date, only one RCT on ACT groups for SAD (Kocovski et al., 2013)
- Our pilot study examined the feasibility and effectiveness of using this ACT protocol (Kocovski et al., 2013) in a naturalistic setting within an acute care general hospital

## Methods

- 13 adult out-patients diagnosed with SAD were enrolled in a 10 session, weekly ACT group at North York General Hospital in Toronto, Canada
- Rating scales were completed at the first and last sessions: Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS), Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN), Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), and the Post-event Processing Inventory (PEPI).
- Patients used "The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness" by Jan Fleming and Nancy Kocovski, and the group was run following Fleming and Kocovski's protocol

## Results

- 13 participants completed the questionnaire package during week 1 of treatment and 11 during week 10 of treatment
- Participants were mostly female ( $n = 10$ ); mean age was 32.62 ( $SD = 13.07$ , range: 20-66)
- Reported marital status: single ( $n = 9$ ), cohabitating ( $n = 2$ ), married ( $n = 2$ )
- Highest education attained ranged from having completed high school ( $n = 1$ ), completed some college/university ( $n = 2$ ), and completed college/university ( $n = 10$ )
- Majority of participants identified as Caucasian ( $n = 10$ ), with two participants identifying as Asian and one of mixed heritage
- During week 1, 53.8% of participants were using medication to manage anxiety and during week 10, 46.2% of participants were using medication.

Table 1. Questionnaire Scores When Completed during Week 1 and Week 10 of Treatment.

Questionnaire	Week 1		Week 10		t	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
<b>Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale</b>							
Total Score	65.38	27.12	39.31	11.11	3.189	7	.015
Total Avoidance	15.25	9.32	14.13	7.49	.346	7	.740
Total Fear	34.00	12.54	25.19	5.28	2.05	7	.080
Total Avoid Social	15.30	6.86	6.80	4.02	5.335	9	< 0.001
Total Avoid Perform	15.25	9.32	6.50	4.00	3.152	7	.016
Total Fear Social	16.85	6.03	13.35	2.47	2.004	9	.076
Total Fear Perform	16.69	6.84	11.50	4.87	2.078	7	.076
<b>Social Phobia Inventory</b>							
Total Score	39.55	10.87	29.36	10.31	3.514	10	.006
<b>Self-Compassion Scale</b>							
Grand Self-Compassion Average Total	2.35	.65	3.10	.59	-3.570	10	.005
Kind Mean Total	2.35	.69	3.15	.76	-2.643	10	.025
Judge Mean Total	2.09	.97	3.07	.75	-4.400	10	.001
Common Humanity Mean Total	2.36	1.04	3.18	.84	-2.233	10	.050
Isolation Mean Total	2.48	.94	3.09	1.01	-4.248	10	.002
Mindfulness Mean Total	2.55	.74	3.23	.59	-2.304	10	.044
Over-Identification Mean Total	2.25	1.14	2.89	.94	-2.146	10	.057
<b>Post-event Processing Inventory</b>							
Total Score	46.45	9.50	37.09	10.46	3.874	10	.003
Intensity	19.00	4.54	14.82	4.90	3.387	10	.007
Self-Judgment	12.18	1.83	9.91	2.84	2.483	10	.032
Frequency	15.27	4.31	12.36	3.32	2.846	10	.017

## Discussion

- This 10-week ACT group proved to be feasible with promising results
- Consistent with our results, the aim of ACT is to increase value-based action, with the reduction of anxiety/fear not being a core treatment goal
- Changes on the SCS scale highlight the impact of the mindfulness and self-compassion interventions
- Results were limited to the one group setting examined

## Conclusion

- A 10-session ACT group for adult outpatients can be a feasible and effective treatment for Social Anxiety Disorder
- Our results suggest that this ACT protocol can be effective in a naturalistic setting but further research should replicate these findings within a larger sample

## References

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