Using modeling in Online therapy: Influence of a "fake patient" on the participants' behavior.

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INTRODUCTION

Online therapy promotes interactivity with other participants and with the program itself. Most online therapies rely on instructional learning. However, there is a growing amount of research focusing on the convenience of including instrumental learning as a key variable (Andersson, 2009).

Obesity is considered a serious health problem among developed countries (WHO, 2010). With the objective of offering an obesity prevention program, an online weight control therapy program was developed that included multiple strategies to change the patients' behavior—modeling and instrumental and instructional learning—.

The aim of this study is to analyze whether the patients' behavior may be influenced through modeling. To this end, we introduced a model—"fake patient"—in the program.

METHOD

Participants: 12 adults with no clinical problems.

Two cognitive-behavioral therapists played the role of the "fake patient".

Forum messages were categorized following Hwang et al. (2010)

CONCLUSIONS

- This pilot study aims at analyzing the effect that a model patient’s behavior may have on the participants.
- The results show a significant influence on the participants’ online behavior.
- Forum is mostly used to share experiences.
- More studies are needed that explore whether using multiple strategies to change the patients' behavior improves intervention.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information messages</th>
<th>Motivation messages</th>
<th>Shared experience messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Fake patient</td>
<td>Therapist</td>
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</table>

Pearson's correlation (partial correlation controlling for therapist's messages)

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Participants: 29.3% & 70.7%

Wilcoxon: z = -4.072, p < .001

REFERENCES

