

Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Anxiety in Parkinson's disease: Outcomes for Patients and Caregivers

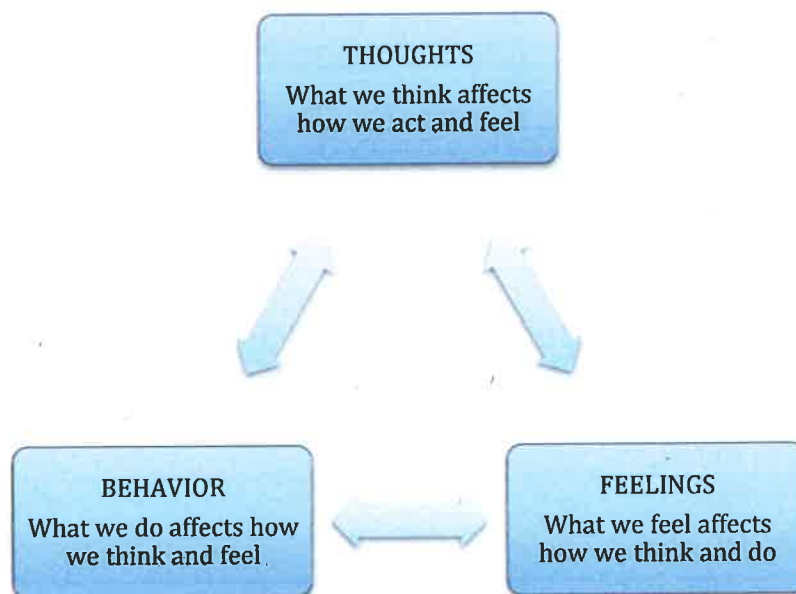
Dissanayaka, N., Pye, D., Mitchell, L., Byrne, G., O'Sullivan, J., Marsh, R., Pachana, N. 2017. Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Anxiety in Parkinson's disease: Outcomes for Patients and Caregivers. *Clinical Gerontol.* 40(3), 159-171.

More than 50% of individuals with PD suffer from anxiety, yet there is limited research on treatment interventions designed specifically for individuals with PD and anxiety. The most common medications for anxiety may have negative side effects for patients with PD and severe anxiety can often be difficult to treat with medication alone. Thus, there is a need for non-medication treatments for anxiety in individuals with PD.

This study aimed to evaluate immediate and follow up effects of a manualized and tailored Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) program, specifically aimed at targeting anxiety among individuals with PD.

What is CBT?

CBT is a non-pharmacological treatment of anxiety that involves education as well as structured, experimental approaches to identifying the relationships between thoughts, feelings and behaviors and learning how to utilize skills and strategies to break the maladaptive cycles that lead to symptoms and distress.



Interestingly, this study aimed to include both PD patients and their caregivers to evaluate whether CBT for PD patients had an impact, not only on the PD patient's anxiety, but also on caregiver function and psychological well-being.

Hypothesis: CBT for individuals with PD will not only lead to reduced rates of anxiety among PD patients, but also improve caregiver psychological wellbeing and caregiver burden.

How did it work?

- Participants could attend therapy sessions with or without their caregiver
- Patients completed 6 CBT sessions
- Each session took 1-1.5 hours
- Various assessments of anxiety, depression, cognition, PD symptoms and quality of life were completed before started the treatment as well as after it was completed.

What was the intervention?

- A manualized CBT intervention that focused on anxiety and has previously been used in patents with dementia was specifically adopted for patients with PD.
- Six intervention sessions covered the following domains:
 - 1) psychoeducation
 - 2) Symptom monitoring
 - 3) Calming techniques including deep breathing
 - 4) Progressive muscle relaxation and imagery
 - 5) Sleep hygiene
 - 6) Self management and relapse prevention planning
- At each session, participants were given a take home handout to be completed prior to the next session (i.e., homework).
- Though the intervention was aimed at PD patients, caregivers were asked and expected to actively participate.

Who participated?

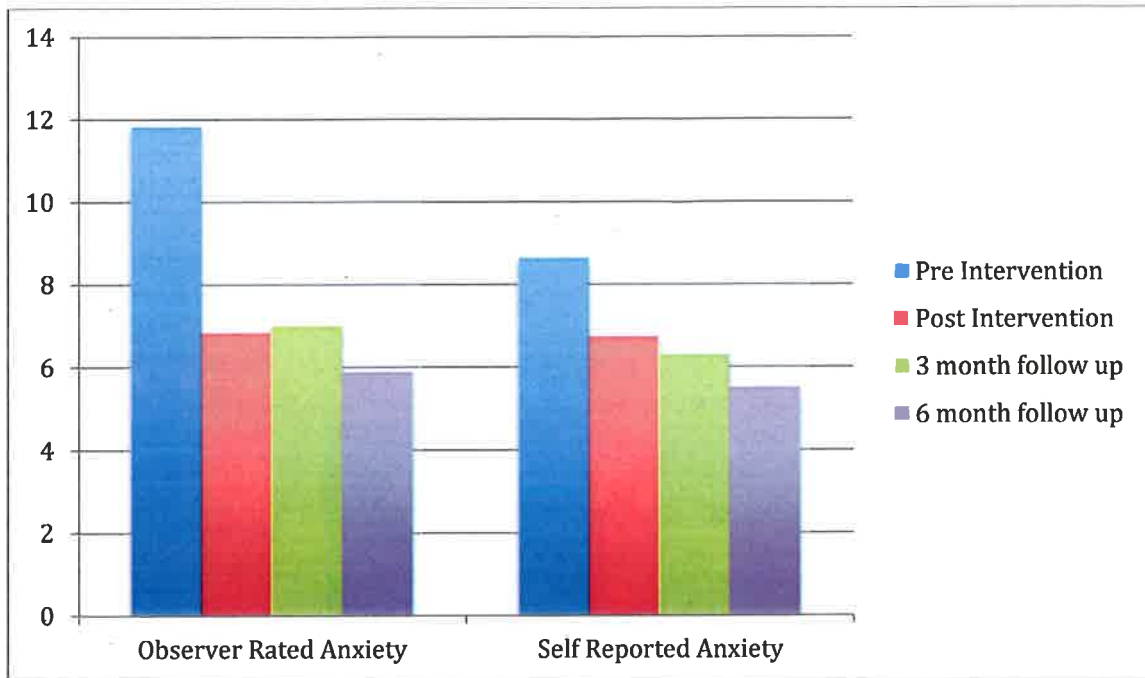
PD Patients	Caregivers
Total = 17	Total = 15
Average Age = 66 (range 51-75)	Average Age = 63 (range 43-75)
10 males, 7 females	7 males, 8 females
100% had a diagnosis of anxiety	13 of the 15 were the PD patient's spouse

What happened?

Outcomes for the PD patients:

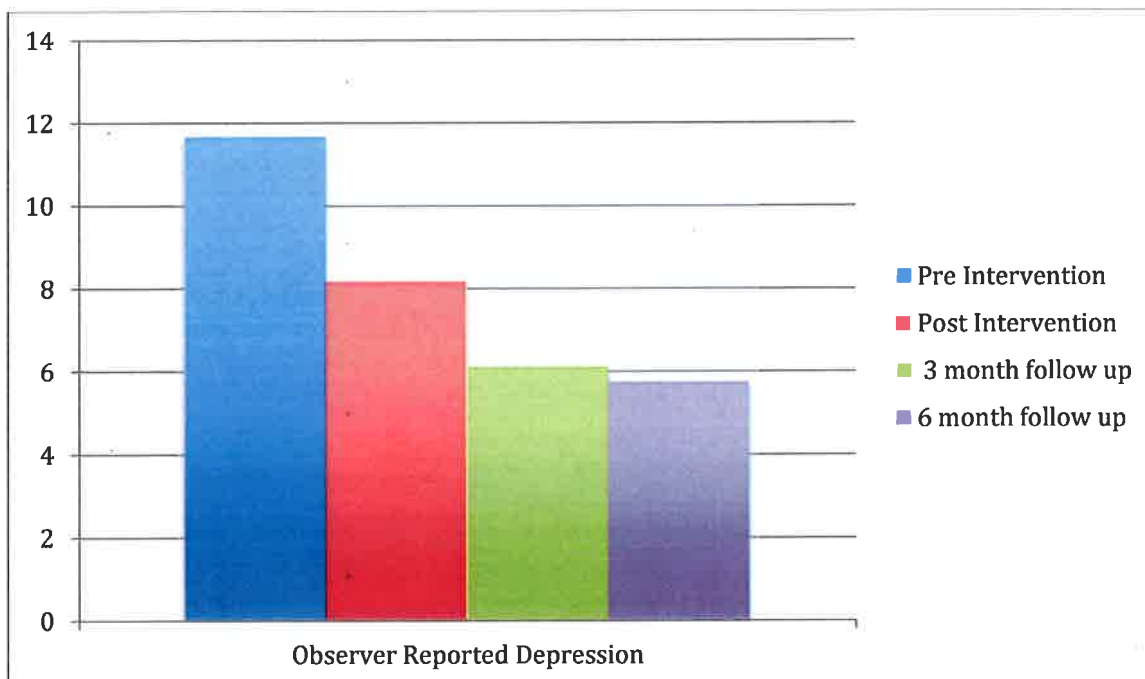
Anxiety:

- Compared to baseline, a significant reduction in anxiety was observed immediately after treatment ended and at 3 month and 6 month follow up.



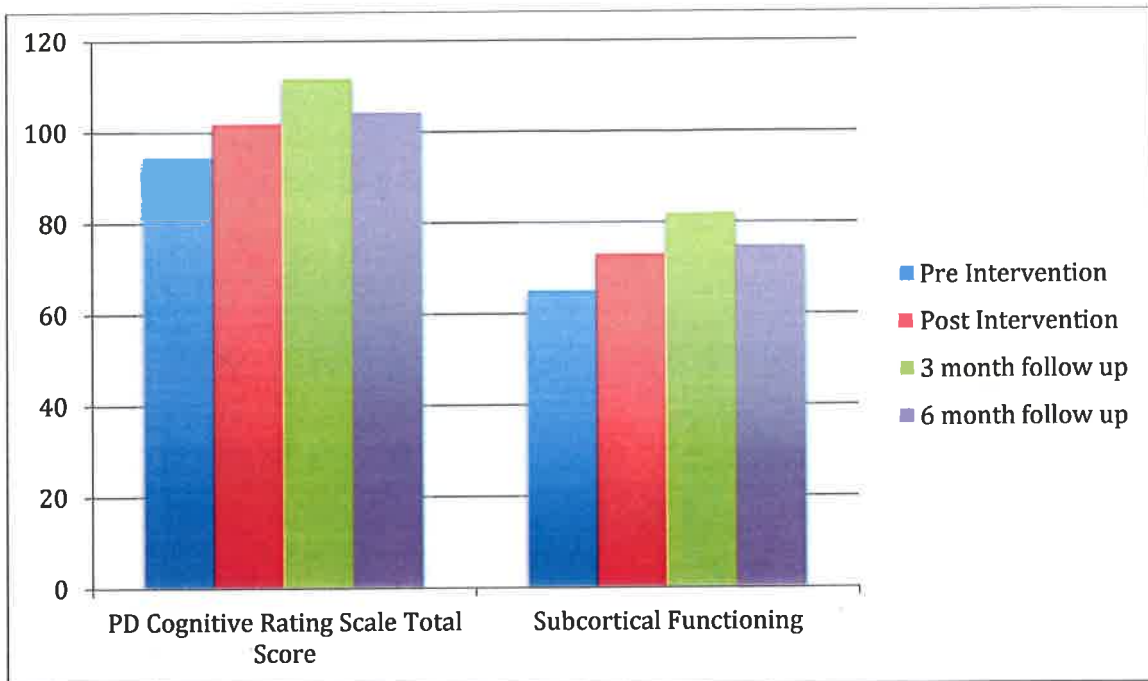
Depression and apathy:

- At 3 months, a significant reduction in observer reported depression scores was observed compared to baseline. There was no significant change in apathy scores.



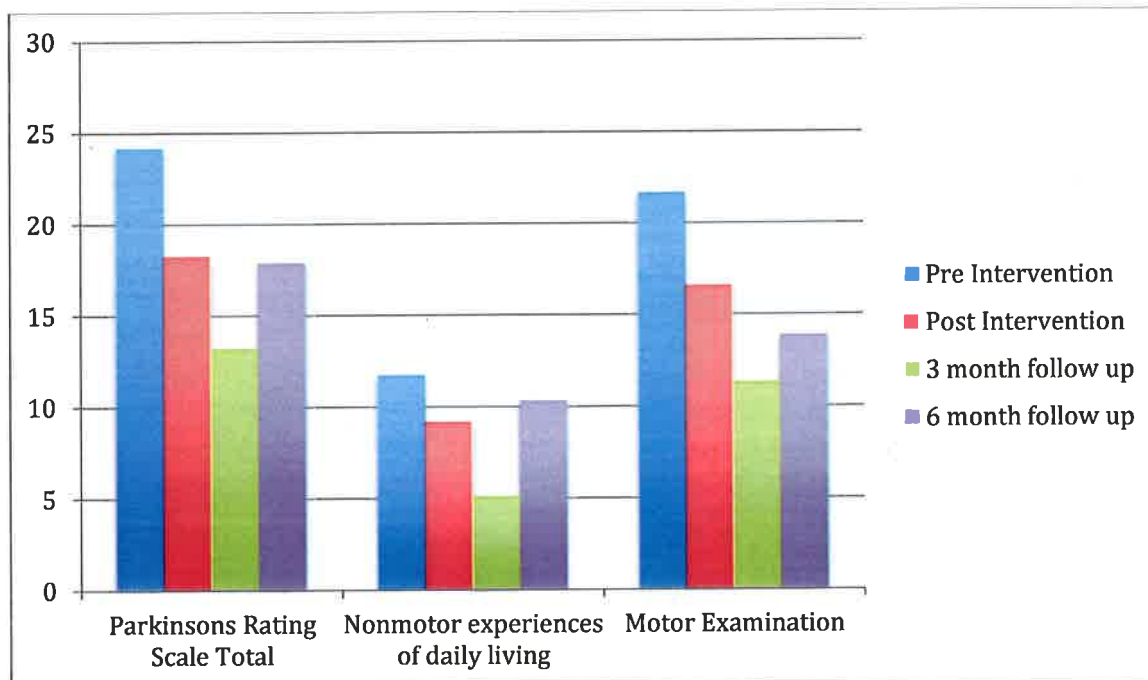
Cognition:

- Cognitive functioning was significantly higher at post intervention compared to baseline, suggesting an improvement in cognitive functioning. This was stable at 3 and 6 months follow up.



PD Impairment:

- Compared to baseline, a significant reduction in functional impact of motor symptoms was observed at post intervention and at 3 month and 6 month follow up.

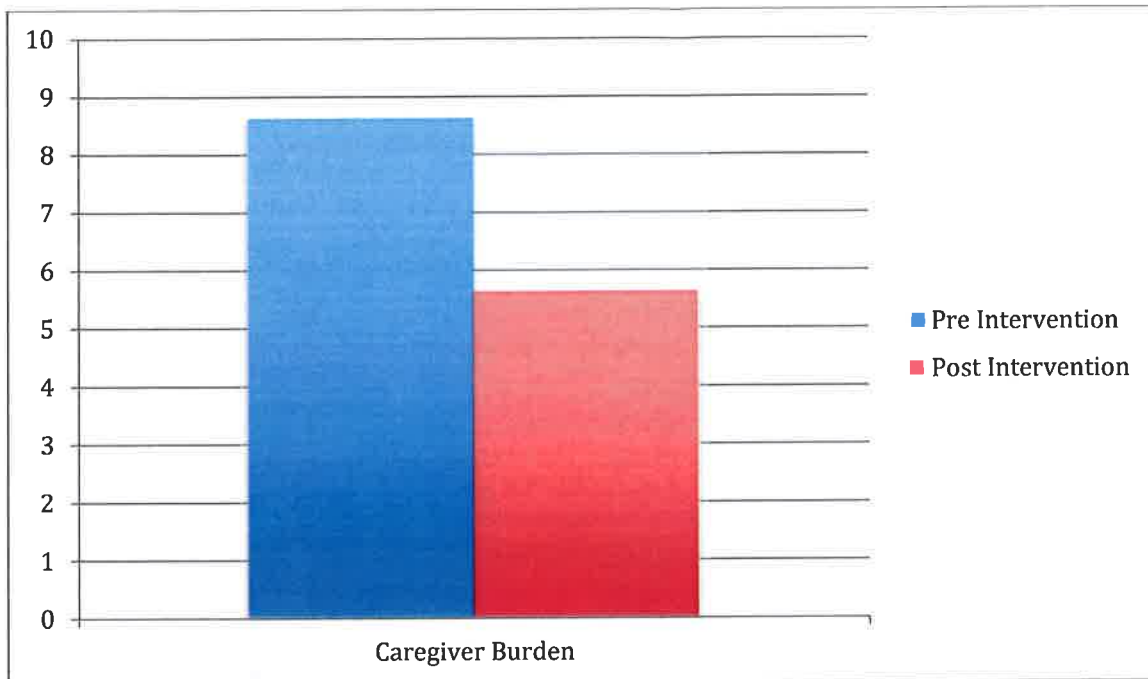


Functional disability and quality of life:

- No significant change post intervention.

Outcomes for Caregivers:

A significant reduction in the caregiver burden was observed at post intervention compared to baseline.



Discussion

- This was the first study to investigate a manualized and tailored CBT approach aimed specifically at treating anxiety in patients with PD and suggest some positive gains.
- The primary study outcome was significant reduction in PD patients' anxiety levels post treatment and maintenance of decreased anxiety at 3 and 6 month follow up.
- Interestingly, the study also suggested that treating anxiety with CBT may assist with maintenance of motor symptoms and improved management of the disease.
- There also may be some impact on successful treatment of anxiety's relationship to cognition.
- Another positive finding is the reduction of caregiver burden following intervention.