Evaluating Therapies

Module 53

Therapy

Evaluating Psychotherapies
- Is Psychotherapy Effective?
- The Relative Effectiveness of Different Therapies
- Evaluating Alternative Therapies
- Commonalities Among Psychotherapies
- Culture and Values in Psychotherapies
Define Psychotherapy

As said earlier, psychotherapy involves an emotionally charged, confiding interaction between a trained therapist and a mental patient.

Evaluating Therapies

To whom do people turn for help with psychological difficulties? Community mental health specialists provide the largest outpatient psychotherapy.

Evaluating Psychotherapies

Within psychotherapies cognitive therapies are most widely used, followed by psychoanalytic and family/group therapies.
Is Psychotherapy Effective?

It is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of psychotherapy because there are different levels on which its effectiveness can be measured.

1. Does the patients sense improvement?
2. Does the therapist feel the patient has improved?
3. How do friends and family feel about patient’s improvement?

Client’s Perceptions

If you ask clients about their experiences of getting into therapy, they always overestimate its effectiveness. Critics however remain skeptical.

1. Clients enter therapy in crisis and crisis may subside over the natural course of time (regression to normalcy).
2. Clients may need to believe the therapy was worth the effort.
3. Clients generally speak kindly of their therapists.

Clinician’s Perceptions

Like clients, clinicians believe in the therapy’s success. They believe that the client is better off after receiving therapy than not.

1. Clinicians are aware of failures, but those of other therapists.
2. If a client seeks another clinician, the former therapist is more likely to argue that the client has developed another psychological problem.
3. Clinicians are likely to testify to the efficacy of their therapy regardless of the outcome of treatment.

OBJECTIVE 53-2| Explain why clients tend to overestimate the effectiveness of psychotherapy.

OBJECTIVE 53-3| Give some reasons why clinicians tend to overestimate the effectiveness of psychotherapy, and describe the phenomena that contribute to clients’ and clinicians’ misperceptions of this area.
Outcome Research

How then can we objectively measure the effectiveness of psychotherapy?

Meta-analysis of a number of studies has suggested that thousands of patients have benefited from getting therapy more so than those who did not.

OBJECTIVE 53-4 | Discuss the importance of outcome studies in judging the effectiveness of psychotherapies, and describe some of these findings.

Outcome Research

Research shows that treated patients were 80% better than untreated ones.

The Relative Effectiveness of Different Therapies

Which psychotherapy will be most effective for treating a particular problem?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disorder</th>
<th>Therapy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Behavior, Cognition, interpersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Cognition, Exposure, Stress Inoculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulimia</td>
<td>Cognitive-behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phobia</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Wetting</td>
<td>Behavior Modification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OBJECTIVE 53-5 | Summarize the findings on which psychotherapies are most effective for specific disorders.
Evaluating Alternative Therapies

Lilienfeld (1998) suggests comparing scientific versus popular therapies through electronic means. The results of such a search are below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Journal Citations</th>
<th>Web Clicks</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systematic desensitization</td>
<td>2,301</td>
<td>64,800</td>
<td>110:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic touch</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>39,200</td>
<td>1:643:74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Jerome's General</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2,400,000</td>
<td>24:35:000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>770,000</td>
<td>150:14:21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Using PsychINFO, January 2005
**Using Google, January 2006

OBJECTIVE 53-6: Evaluate the effectiveness of eye movements desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) and light exposure therapies.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

In EMDR therapy the therapist attempts to unlock and reprocess previously frozen traumatic memories by waving a finger in front of the eyes of a client.

EMDR has not held up under scientific testing.

Light Exposure Therapy

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a form of depression has been effectively treated by light exposure therapy. This form of therapy has been scientifically validated.
Commonalities Among Psychotherapies

Three commonalities shared by all forms of psychotherapies are:

1. Hope for demoralized people.
3. An empathic, trusting and a caring relationship.

OBJECTIVE 53-7 | Describe the three benefits attributed to all psychotherapies.

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Culture and Values in Psychotherapy

Psychotherapies may differ from each other and from clients in their personal beliefs, values, and cultural backgrounds.

Search for a therapist should include visiting two or more therapists to judge with whom the client will feel comfortable.

OBJECTIVE 53-8 | Discuss the role of values and cultural differences in the therapeutic process.

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Therapists & Their Training

**Clinical psychologists**: Mostly PhDs. Expert in research, assessment, and therapy, supplemented by a supervised internship.

**Clinical or Psychiatric Social Worker**: Master of Social Work plus postgraduate supervision prepares some social workers to offer psychotherapy, mostly to people with everyday personal and family problems.

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Therapists & Their Training

Counselors: Pastoral counselors, abuse counselors work with problems arising from family relations and substance abuse and with spouse and child abusers and their victims.

Psychiatrists: Physicians who specialize in the treatment of psychological disorders. Not all psychiatrists have had extensive training in psychotherapy, but as MDs they can prescribe medications.

Preventing Psychological Disorders

“It is better to prevent than cure.”
Peruvian Folk Wisdom

Preventing psychological disorders means removing the factors that affect the society. Factors like poverty, meaning less work, constant criticism, unemployment, racism, and sexism.

Mental Health Programs

Advocates of preventive mental health programs argue that many psychological disorders are likely due to social conditions.

To prevent such disorders, we should change oppressive, esteem-destroying environments into more benevolent, nurturing environments that foster individual growth and self-confidence.

OBJECTIVE 54-8 | Explain the rationale of preventive mental health programs, and discuss how this viewpoint illustrates the biopsychosocial perspective in psychology.

OBJECTIVE 53-9 | Explain the rationale for preventive mental health programs.
Psychological Disorders are Biopsychosocial in Nature

 Biological correlates: Some psychological disorders may stem from hereditary factors, biological malfunctions, or structural abnormalities in the brain. These disorders can also be influenced by environmental factors such as trauma or injury.

 Psychological correlates: Psychological disorders can be influenced by cognitive factors, such as stress, anxiety, or depression. These disorders can also be caused by social or cultural factors, such as bullying or discrimination.

 Social-cultural correlates: Some psychological disorders may be more prevalent in certain cultures or social groups. These disorders can also be influenced by societal norms and values.

 Successful intervention: Effective treatment strategies for psychological disorders may include a combination of medication, therapy, and lifestyle changes. It is important to work closely with healthcare professionals to develop an individualized treatment plan.

 Additional text:

 'Psychological Disorders are Biopsychosocial in Nature' is a module from the Psychology 8th edition by David Myers. It discusses the biopsychosocial model of psychological disorders, which suggests that these disorders are influenced by biological, psychological, and social-cultural factors. The module emphasizes the importance of understanding these factors in order to develop effective treatment strategies. It also highlights the need for continued research and education in this area to improve the quality of care for individuals with psychological disorders.