

PRESS RELEASE

NICE issues guidance on computerised cognitive behavioural therapy for treating mental health problems

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has today issued guidance to the NHS in England and Wales recommending two computerised cognitive behavioural therapy (CCBT) packages, widening the available options for treating people with depression and anxiety.

This guidance updates previous NICE technology appraisal guidance No51 from October 2002 and concerns five specific packages for the delivery of computerised cognitive behaviour therapy, accessed via a referral from a general practitioner (GP): three for depression (Beating the Blues, COPE and Overcoming Depression), one for panic/phobia (FearFighter) and one for obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) (OCFighter, previously known as BTSteps).

After considering the evidence, the Institute's independent Appraisal Committee came to the following conclusions:

- Beating the Blues is recommended as an option for delivering cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) in the management of mild and moderate depression.
- There is insufficient evidence to recommend the use of COPE and Overcoming Depression as a clinically or cost effective option for the management of depression, except as part of ongoing or new clinical

trials that are designed to generate robust and relevant data on the clinical effectiveness of these specific CCBT packages.

- FearFighter is recommended as an option for delivering CBT in the management of panic and phobia.
- OCFighter (previously known as BTSteps) is not recommended as an option for delivering CBT in the management of OCD.
- People currently using OCFighter, whether as routine therapy or as part of a clinical trial, should have the option to continue on therapy until the person, or the GP and/or specialist, consider it appropriate to stop.

Professor Peter Littlejohns, Clinical and Public Health Director at NICE and Executive Lead for the guidance, said: “Today’s guidance will make a real difference in terms of increasing the range of options available to patients suffering from depression and anxiety. It provides clear advice to the NHS and patients, no matter where they live in England and Wales, on where CCBT treatments can add value.”

Ends

Notes to Editors

About NICE

1. On 1 April 2005 the National Institute for Clinical Excellence took on the functions of the Health Development Agency to form the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). NICE is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health.
2. NICE produces guidance in three areas of health:
 - public health – guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health for those working in the NHS, local authorities and the wider public and voluntary sector
 - health technologies – guidance on the use of new and existing medicines, treatments and procedures within the NHS
 - clinical practice – guidance on the appropriate treatment and care of people with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS.

About technology appraisals

3. Technology appraisals are recommendations on the use of new and existing medicines and treatments within the NHS in England and Wales, such as:
 - medicines (for example, drugs)
 - medical devices (for example, hearing aids or inhalers)

- diagnostic techniques (tests used to identify diseases)
 - surgical procedures (for example, repairing hernias)
 - health promotion activities (for example, patient education models for diabetes).
4. Our technology appraisal recommendations are prepared by an independent Committee, who include healthcare professionals working in the NHS and people who are familiar with the issues affecting patients and carers. The Committee considers the evidence on the clinical and cost effectiveness of the technology – this includes hearing the views of, and evidence from, clinical health professionals, experts and patients.
 5. NHS organisations in England and Wales have to make the resources and facilities available to enable NICE guidance to be implemented. In January 2002 the Government announced a legal obligation for the NHS to provide funding for treatments and drugs recommended by NICE as a part of its technology appraisals work programme.

About Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive behavioural therapy is a kind of psychotherapy that is based on the idea that what we think about ourselves and the world around us affects how we feel and our behaviour. By changing the way we think, we can change our behaviour and emotional reactions. Cognitive behavioural therapy involves sessions with a therapist but the methods are also used in self-help manuals, audio tapes and videos.

About Computerised CBT

In computerised cognitive behavioural therapy – or CCBT for short – the cognitive behavioural therapy is delivered using a computer. The CCBT may be in addition to or instead of sessions with a therapist. There are several different CCBT programs available to treat anxiety and depression. Before someone starts using CCBT it's recommended that they are assessed to make sure the treatment is suitable for them, and they need to be given support in using the program. CCBT is not suitable for an individual with more severe symptoms of anxiety or depression who needs more intensive treatment and support from healthcare professionals.