Cognitive Therapy for Contamination-Related OCD: ERP and Beyond
Adam S. Radomsky, Ph.D.
2011 ICCP Conference, İstanbul

Workshop Reading List

A very helpful overview of cognitive and behavioural approaches to treating OCD and its comorbidities. If your patient suffers from OCD and other disorder(s) you will find this practically-based book to be most helpful. In places, the book is quite behavioural, but it is easy to reconstrue these as behavioural experiments, within a cognitive framework.


This excellent new treatment book provides excellent background information about cognitive behavioural theory, previous empirical work in OCD as well as a highly useful set of treatment strategies that can be used in the cognitive-behavioral treatment of OCD.


This study examines the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural therapy on patients with obsessive thoughts and no overt compulsive rituals; a group that had been thought to be resistant to this form of therapy. Twenty-nine patients were randomly assigned to either a treatment condition (immediately receiving CBT) or a waiting list condition. Results indicate that, compared with waiting list patients, treated patients’ symptoms improved significantly. When waiting list patients were then treated, the collective group improved on all outcome measures and gains were maintained at 6-month follow-up.


This study compares the cognitive appraisals in twenty-eight young individuals (between ages 11 and 18 years) with OCD, twenty-eight young individuals with other types of anxiety disorders, and twenty-eight young individuals from a non-clinical group, on three measures of cognitive appraisals. Compared with the other groups, results show that the OCD group scored significantly higher on measures of inflated responsibility, thought-action fusion, and concern over mistakes. These findings indicate evidence of an extension of cognitive appraisals held by adults with OCD to young people with the disorder.

This study examines the relationship between responsibility and checking behaviour. An experiment was carried out on 30 Ss who qualified for the DSM-IIIR diagnosis of OCD in order to test the hypothesis, derived from cognitive theory, that changes in perceived responsibility are followed by corresponding changes in the urge to check compulsively. The manipulation succeeded in increasing/decreasing perceived responsibility, as required for the experiment. Decreased responsibility was followed by significant declines in discomfort and in the urge to carry out the compulsive checking. Increased responsibility was followed by corresponding increases in discomfort and urges, but these failed to reach a statistically significant level. Additionally, two types of OCD-related cognitive biases were encountered.


This article discusses the theory that obsessions are caused by catastrophic misinterpretations of the significance of one’s thoughts. Evidence in support of this theory is presented, as well as treatment strategies.


In an extension of the previous article, this paper explains the theory behind both the frequency of obsessions and why they persist, internal an external provocations of obsessions, and the role and functions of neutralization and inflated responsibility.


This article discusses the theory that compulsive checking is occurs when people who believe that they have a special, elevated responsibility for preventing harm, mainly to others, are unsure that the perceived threat has been reduced or removed. The intensity and duration of this checking is determined by three "multipliers” and the recurrence of the checking is promoted by a self-perpetuating mechanism, comprising four elements. Experimental predictions are set out and the therapeutic implications of the construal are discussed.


This book contains a comprehensive description of the treatment for obsessions as well as relevant forms, schedules and interviews.

In this article, contamination is defined, the main types of contaminants set out and the characteristics of the fear are described. The distinction between normal and abnormal feelings of contamination is considered, and abnormal beliefs about contamination are analyzed. Attention is drawn to the fact that contamination can occur without any physical contact, and the concept of mental pollution is used to elucidate this process. The causes and consequences of contamination fears are described, and some connections between fear and disgust are considered. It is suggested that applying cognitive analyses and tactics may improve our ability to treat these powerful and tenacious fears.


A detailed and incisive approach to understanding the causes, experience and psychological/emotional consequences of betrayal. The article approaches betrayal with particular relevance to mental contamination in OCD, as well as references to PTSD and other anxiety disorders.


A recent replication and extension of the van den Hout and Kindt studies (see below), this time using real appliances in a protocol that was designed to enhance threat, responsibility and ecological validity.


This article reports on an experimental investigation of memory using ‘real’ contaminants and real objects. It was shown that participants with contamination fears remembered significantly more contaminated than touched but non-contaminated objects. This effect was not found in anxious or non-clinical control participants. This is important because it shows how people with contamination fears have an amplified memory for threatening information.


This article outlines both the theory of compulsive checking, and the ensuing practical applications of this theory to patients who struggle with checking and
doubt. Some of the examples to be used in the workshop are echoed in the videos contained in the online version of the manuscript.


This article describes the development of the Vancouver Obsessional Compulsive Inventory (VOCI), a revision of the widely used self-report measure, the Maudsley Obsessional Compulsive Inventory (MOCI). The VOCI assesses a broad range of obsessions, compulsions, avoidance behaviour, and personality characteristics of OCD. Excellent psychometric properties were demonstrated among samples of people with OCD, people with other anxiety disorders or depression, community adults, and undergraduate students.


This article reviews the authors’ work on how repeated checking can cause memory distrust. They have conducted an elegant set of experiments in which participants are asked to repeatedly check virtual gas stoves and virtual lightbulbs. The fact that their work has been carried out with non-clinical participants is particularly helpful as it can be concluded that even without initial doubting, repeated checking can lead to memory distrust, which presumably leads to doubt.


This article outlines the cognitive model of obsessions and its application through treatment strategies and videos.


This articles reports on a randomized controlled trial for obsessions in OCD. The trial represents one of the first evidence-based approaches to the treatment of obsessions in OCD, and demonstrates that a cognitively-based approach following directly from the theory of obsessions can produce effective and robust results.