

# INTERACTIVE CBT INTERNET TREATMENT FOR SOCIAL PHOBIA AMONG STUTTERERS

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## Introduction:

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) has been proven to be an effective treatment for social phobia among stutterers in a group format (Menzies, O'Brian, Onslow, St Clare, Packman & Block, 2007). The urgent need for clinical psychology interventions for this group has been highlighted in numerous papers (Menzies, Onslow, Packman, & O'Brian, 2007), and a recent review on health outcomes using Internet treatments has shown promising results (Carlbring & Andersen, 2006). Interactive, tailored treatment has been demonstrated to be more effective than static, text based treatment (Danaher, 2006). The primary challenge for internet treatments is to imitate the complex client-therapist interaction that results from traditional, one-on-one therapy.

## Methods/Procedures:

Limitations of previous online psychology treatment programs were considered, and a computer program is under development that offers several novel features. The goal of the current program is to imitate the complex relationship between a client and therapist by using a personalized model that is based on anxiety responses for people who stutter and struggle with social anxiety. These responses are based on data from 15 years of working in the field of clinical psychology with social anxiety and stuttering. The program is designed to conform to the cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) framework. Recent advances from specialists in the treatment of social phobia (Clark & Wells of Oxford, UK) have been integrated into the treatment.

## Projected outcomes and significance:

An initial edition of the program will be ready before the end of the year online. At this stage, a few case studies will be trialed to ensure that the program is working properly. Finally, a randomized, controlled trial will be conducted. An experimental group would receive the CBT computer treatment and a control group would receive a computerized educational program. Both groups will receive speech therapy for stuttering.

The benefits of the research are very extensive. In general, a common complaint among speech therapists is that they do not know how to deal with the anxiety aspects of the stuttering problem. The computerized treatment program is designed to be a standalone, internet-based solution for patients to use in parallel with speech therapy. Having an interactive "computer psychologist" would be very cost effective, and could reach many people at the same time. This has particular benefits for those in remote areas without easy access to treatment facilities.

The screenshot displays two side-by-side scenarios within a teal-bordered interface. The left scenario shows a woman, Karen, sitting on a blue blanket in a park, eating. A purple thought bubble above her says, "What a beautiful day! It is so sunny and wonderful out here!". Below the image is the text "How do you think Karen feels as a result of her causal thought" and a dropdown menu labeled "Choose a feeling for Karen" with a "Press to see how Karen felt" button. The right scenario shows a man, Ben, standing in a park with his arms crossed. A purple thought bubble above him says, "It is so frustrating having to cross so many streets to get to the park and the pollution is out of control!". Below the image is the text "How do you think Ben feels as a result of his causal thought" and a dropdown menu labeled "Choose a feeling for Ben" with a "Press to see how Ben felt" button.

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