The application and efficacy of metaphors in the process of cognitive – behavioral therapy for depressive patients

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Introduction:

Recently, cognitive approaches to therapy have been facing and increasing constructivist orientation, in which persons are viewed as actively constructing their own reality from their deep/tacit/unconscious knowledge representation.

The use of metaphors is suggested as a therapeutic tool to access and change tacit / unconscious level of cognitive representation (Goncalves and Craine, 1990).

The positive effects of usage of metaphors in psychotherapy can be attributed to their unique characteristic. Metaphor as a multidimensional script involves many cognitive emotional and motivational processes that unify different aspects of human communication in a compact, condensed and easy to understand form. Imagery has an important role in this pattern and provides the sequential analysis of the logical ordering of the events (Ghassemzadeh, 1999). Kopp (1995, 2001) suggest a three-dimensional theory of cognition. He discusses about three

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types of cognition: Logical/prepositional cognition, imaginal cognition and metaphoric cognition. Metaphoric cognition is expressed in language through verbal metaphors – word pictures in which an image is employed as a word to convey meaning.

Also, the efficacy of metaphors in the process of psychotherapy can be explained through different theoretical approaches for example The Interacting Cognitive Subsystems (ICS) model (Teasdale, 1993). It differentiates between two levels of meaning, a specific and a more generic level. ICS propose that generic level of meaning which represented by patterns of implicational code, is the antecedent to emotion. This distinction ultimately results in a distinction between two kind of belief, intellectual and emotional and two way of knowing, knowing with the head and knowing with the heart. It can be postulated that metaphors because of implicational meaning that have become embedded in them and their position in high generic level of processing, have an important role in emotional processing or more exactly in knowing with heart.

The purpose of present study was to compare two modes of CBT: propositional (traditional) Cognitive Behavior Therapy (PCBT) and Metaphorical Cognitive Behavior Therapy (MCBT). In MCBT, logical of treatment and concepts were explained in a metaphorical way. For example, the cognitive errors were described as computer ‘s viruses which can disturb information processing. Also specific metaphor therapy techniques adapted from Koop (1995) were added to treatment programs. In these techniques therapist focuses on client generated metaphors.

METODE
Tow approaches (PCBT and MCBT) were compared in single case study with multiple baseline design subject were
8 depressive outpatients who referred for psychological intervention. They selected through semi-structured interview on the basis of DSM-IV criteria and having at least score 17 in BDI-II.

Two therapists (one man and one woman), both PH.D. in clinical psychology with at least 10 years experience in CBT separately undertook the therapies of patients.

Measures consisted of:
1. Beck depression Inventory (BDI-II) (Ghosseemzadeh, submitted for review).
2. Automatic Thought Questionnaire (ATQ-persion) (Ghassemzadeh et al, in press).
3. Dysfunctional Attitude scale (Imber and et al, 1990)

As usual, the tradition in single case studies gathering data from baselines compared to their reduction during and in the end of treatment sessions.

Also by use of a formula have suggested by hersen and Barlow (1976) total change percent in each of treatment variables computed.

Results:
The pretest, midtest and post test assessments that MCBT was more efficacious indicated in reduction of depressive symptoms and change of negative and dysfunction thoughts, attitudes and underlying assumptions (table 1)

Table 1: Percent of total change in treatment variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>BDI-II</th>
<th>ATQ</th>
<th>DAS</th>
<th>SCT</th>
<th>SDT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PCBT</td>
<td>%52</td>
<td>%59</td>
<td>%60</td>
<td>%36</td>
<td>%41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCBT</td>
<td>%68</td>
<td>%61</td>
<td>%68</td>
<td>%75</td>
<td>%68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The superiority of MCBT in the study can be attributed to metaphor properties such as its motivational and epistemological characteristics, (Martin and etal1992), its imagery component and its analogical and implicational representation (Gassemzadeh, 1999). These results are consistent with previous research which show usage of metaphor in psychotherapy improve the efficacy of treatment (ie. Angus and Rennie, 1988; Angus and Korman, 2002; Levitt, Korman and Angus, 2000; Martin, Cummings and Habberg, 1992; Mcmullen, 1985; Mcmullen, 1989, Macmullen and conway, 1996).
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