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Can't Stop Worrying?

Examining the Mechanisms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Sydney A. Parkinson & Dr. Alexander M. Penney

MacEwan University

Introduction



- Individuals with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) experience excessive and chronic worry ¹
- Metacognitions,⁶ intolerance of uncertainty,³ and fear of emotions ² have been associated with worry & GAD.
- No prior longitudinal study has compared these mechanisms to determine which predominantly maintain GAD symptoms



Examine whether changes in negative & positive beliefs about worry, intolerance of uncertainty, and fear of emotions, predict changes in worry and GAD symptoms over time

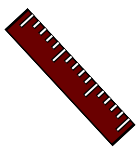
Methodology



N = 372 psychology students (88.2% female) who were prescreened for high worry



Self report measures were completed at baseline and 4-month follow-up



- Generalized Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire (GADQ-IV) ⁷
- Penn State Worry Questionnaire (PSWQ) ⁵
- Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale-18 (IUS-18) ⁴
- Metacognitions Questionnaire-30 (MCQ-30) ⁸
- Affective Control Scale (ACS) ⁹

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Believing your worry is **uncontrollable and dangerous** is the best predictor of changes in worry & GAD symptoms



Take Away...

Primarily targeting negative beliefs, while incorporating intolerance of uncertainty and fear of emotions into therapy, may enhance the treatment of GAD

Results

Regression analyses were conducted using change scores on all measures from baseline to 4-month follow-up (i.e., T2-T1)

Variable	R	R ² Change	β	t	pr
DV: PSWQ					
Step 1	.538	.289**			
MCQ-NB			.269	4.91**	.27
MCQ-PB			.080	1.65	.09
IUS-18			.130	2.51*	.14
ACS-ANX			.155	2.70**	.15
ACS-DEP			.179	3.27**	.18

Changes in **negative beliefs about worry, intolerance of uncertainty, and fear of anxiety & depression** predicted changes in **worry**

Variable	R	R ² Change	β	t	pr
DV: GADQ-IV					
Step 1	.526	.277**			
MCQ-NB			.316	3.61**	.27
MCQ-PB			.068	-0.25	.07
IUS-18			.183	3.56**	.17
ACS-ANX			.100	0.63	.08
ACS-DEP			.104	1.28	.09

Changes in **negative beliefs about worry & intolerance of uncertainty** predicted changes in **GAD symptoms** over time



Changes in **negative beliefs about worry** was the **strongest predictor of changes in worry & GAD symptoms over time**



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