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Paper

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Arts for the blues: a new creative intervention for depression

Keywords: Creative arts, psychological therapies, psychotherapy, multimodal, depression.

Aim/Purpose: The aim was to develop a new creative intervention for depression and to begin to evaluate its feasibility and effectiveness.

Design/Methodology: The design of the intervention is based on a thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008) of helpful factors within the NICE recognised therapeutic interventions for depression including CBT, counselling for depression, psychodynamic psychotherapy as well as arts therapies. Two pilot studies tested the intervention at two events at a university providing verbal and creative evaluations. The intervention was also tested with IAPT staff and service users including pre- and post- measures (e.g. PHQ9, GAD7, PANAS) and focus groups. Focus groups are currently analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Ethical Approval: Ethics Committee of Edge Hill University and NHS Ethics Committee for IAPT groups.

Results/Findings: A framework for a new pluralistic client-led multimodal creative intervention for depression was created. It included activities focused on connecting with the arts and the body (e.g. through images or gestures emerging from a body scan), experiencing and expressing emotions (e.g. using improvised movement or image-making on a specific topic), sharing with others (e.g. using mirroring or interactive scribbling), working with insight (e.g., using imagery, symbolism and metaphor), learning skills (e.g. mindful movement, breathing exercises, use of particular material in art-making), integrating useful material back to one's life (e.g. deriving personal meaning from explorations) (Parsons et al submitted for publication). Responses from the pilot workshops were positive regarding feasibility with the majority of participants reporting overall satisfaction. There was feedback to be mindful of the potentially overwhelming nature of multimodal approaches for people with depression (Haslam et al accepted for publication). IAPT focus groups are currently being analysed and the results will be available for the BACP conference in May 2019.

Research limitations: This is a preliminary study which has used pilot workshops to develop a new intervention, so generalisability is limited.

Conclusions/Implications: There is potential for creative interventions to serve as an adjunctive or alternative therapy to clients who do not respond well to CBT or other talking psychotherapies. In the first instance, it is hoped that this intervention could be used within IAPT services.