



Consistency is needed when measuring and reporting outcomes in child and adolescent anxiety disorders trials

By Dr. Jessica Edwards

This year, Cathy Creswell, Maaïke Nauta and colleagues from around the world convened a series of international activities based around measuring and reporting in treatment trials for child and adolescent anxiety disorders. The resulting international consensus statement was recently published in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. Various researchers, mental health professionals, young people, parents and caregivers were all invited to give their views to help develop these new recommendations.

“Anxiety disorders are extremely common and often start in childhood or adolescence so it is really critical that we can offer effective interventions driven by an understanding of what works for whom”, explains lead author Cathy Creswell. “The large and growing pool of randomised controlled trials could provide a great opportunity to develop this understanding; however, we are limited by the wide array of measures that are used and the different ways in which those measures are reported. As an example, outcomes extracted from diagnostic measures have included whether the child has recovered from the primary disorder, whether the child has recovered from all disorders, whether the child has recovered from a specific disorder or a subset of disorders, and whether the primary disorder is no longer the primary disorder. These different outcomes are often combined in meta-analyses but are clearly measuring quite different things.”

To help resolve this issue, the consensus statement sets out clear recommendations on measuring and reporting: (1) diagnostic outcomes; (2) continuous measures of symptoms and functional interference; and (3) sample and treatment characteristics. The group hope that this set of recommendations promotes clear and consistent reporting in trials going forward. Then, the community will be able to maximise the opportunities that come from international research in this important area.

Referring to:

Creswell, C. Nauta, M.H., Hudson, J.L. et al. (2020), *Research Review: Recommendations for reporting on treatment trials for child and adolescent anxiety disorders – an international consensus statement*. *J. Child Psychol. Psychiatr.* doi: 10.1111/jcpp.13283.