

## 6. Therapist Training

### Rationale for a Manualised Treatment of ADHD

Well-controlled treatment outcome studies have provided a wealth of evidence for the efficacy of specific manualised treatments for psychiatric conditions.

The benefits of this modular treatment approach include well-documented efficacy, less reliance on intuitive clinical judgment, and greater ease in training and supervising therapists in specific clinical strategies and techniques (Wilson, 1998a). Another benefit has been the development of various self-help interventions derived from manual-based practices (Fairburn & Carter, 1997).

Unfortunately, to date no manualised group treatment has been developed for tweens and teens with ADHD. For this reason, I consulted existing manualised treatments for bipolar, anxiety as well as depression and turned to Safran. et. al. manualised intervention for adults with ADHD for guidance. The main objective of the program is to increase the dissemination of effective psychological therapies for ADHD and capacity building - broadening the range of mental health providers who can provide individual, or group based effective treatments for ADHD.

This manual used in conjunction with the corresponding participant workbook offers effective treatment strategies that follow an evidence-based treatment approach. It provides clinicians with effective means of teaching participants skills that have been tested and shown to help children understand and cope with their ADHD. The session-by-session plan is a practical resource for therapists new to the field of ADHD. Together, the therapist guide and participant workbook comprise all of the information and materials necessary to deliver this treatment in the context of group therapy with between 6 and 10 participants.

The intervention consists of 6 weekly CBT based sessions addressing core difficulties and concerns of the tween and teen population with ADHD. Each session is 2-hours long. Parents are not physically involved in the treatment; however, between sessions the parents of the participants receive an email explaining:

- the objectives of the session,
- what was covered in the session,
- what to look for in their child's workbook.

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When working with teens the e-mail is addressed to the teen directly. This helps with rapport building, accountability for weekly home activities and sense of ongoing support.

Prior to the development of the workbook, OnTrac was delivered using worksheets. In its current format the program is a manualised intervention with participant workbook and therapist guide. The participant workbook took the program to another level in terms of structure, organisation and consistency- all issues that most children with ADHD struggle to uphold. The effectiveness and acceptability of the treatment was tested/piloted over a 4 - year period across 10 programs totalling around 85 children aged 11-13 years, recruited from ADHD WA's membership base. The pre and post data collected over the 4 years was used by Psychology student from Curtin University in Perth Australia, for her Honours project under the supervision of Professor Natalie Gasson. The results showed that the young people taking part in the program had achieved meaningful and significant reductions in ADHD symptoms (publication in preparation).

The program is one of the Service-Learning Projects for Third-Year Medical Students from the University of Western Australia.