Implementing a Measurement Feedback System in a Psychology Graduate Training Clinic

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1. Introduction

Background
- A Measurement Feedback System (MFS) is a software tool that routinely gathers symptom level information from psychotherapy clients.
- MFSs allow clinicians to identify when clients are at risk to treatment failure.
- The data gathered from MFSs can be collected into a database for clinical research.

Gap in the Literature
- Past studies have focused primarily on the use of MFSs as clinical support tools and not as potential research tools.
- There is a lack of research on the use of MFS in graduate student training clinics.

Study Aim
- This study aimed to provide a framework for the implementation of MFSs as both a clinical support and a research tool.
- We collected qualitative information about the unique challenges and/or benefits of implementation in a graduate student training.

2. Method

USU Community Clinic
- The USU Community Clinic is the graduate training clinic for students from Utah State University’s psychology department.
- Psychotherapy for a variety disorders is offered to clients of all ages.

OwlOutcomes
- OwlOutcomes is an MFS that provides therapists with a range of measures that can be completed routinely by clients on an iPad or other electronic device (see figure 1a).
- Graphical results showing the change in a client’s symptom levels over time is instantly available to the clinician (see figure 1b).

Funding: This research was supported by a training grant from the Society for a Science of Clinical Psychology. PI: Rick Cruz; Co-PI: Michael Levin. We thank the participating clients, student therapists, staff, and program faculty who participated in the implementation of this project.

2. Method - continued

Implementation Phases
- Planning Phase
  - Framework for the clinical research database established.
  - Clinic procedures associated with OwlOutcomes developed.
  - Privacy concerns dealing with clinical database and software addressed.
  - IRB approval acquired
- Alpha (small-scale) Implementation
  - Select clinicians trained to use the system
  - Small sample of clients began therapy using OwlOutcomes
- Adjustment Phase (Summer 2016)
  - Improvements will be made to current procedures in anticipation of full-scale implementation.
- Beta (full) Implementation (Fall 2016)
  - OwlOutcomes will be introduced to all 2nd year practicum students and used with the majority of clients.

2. Results

Implications of Creating a Research Database
- Extra precautions had to be taken in terms of the IRB application process, and in vetting the web-based technology, to ensure protection of client private health information.
- Because of the need to secure client data along with the logistics of the OwlOutcomes software, security and data sharing issues had to be addressed when setting up the database.
- The initial planning phase, including the IRB application process, was considerably lengthened because of the novelty of the data collection technology at the institution.

Using an MFS in a Training clinics
- Student clinicians, clinic administrators, and supervisors were all relatively eager and open to the new system.
- Client intake fluctuated, with more clients being admitted at the beginning of the semester, affecting the implementation timeline.

Further Observations
- A small-scale implementation with only a few clinicians provided the opportunity to establish procedures and overcome obstacles.
- Communication between researchers and key players (i.e. clinic administrators, supervisors, student clinicians) was essential to smooth implementation.
- Attending to these issues allowed us to initiate the alpha implementation, and provided a foundation for larger beta implementation in Fall 2016

5. References


Figure 1: OwlOutcome interface for a) taking a measure b) a graph of symptoms

Figure 2: Timeline of implementation

Figure 1a

Figure 1b