**Main Analyst’s Coded Transcript**

First coding: 14/05/2024

Last updated: 20/05/2024

**Research Questions**

1. What can we learn about patients’ experiences of CBT-AN-20?
2. What do patients’ experiences tell us about how we might do therapy better in future?

**Transcript**

I found it very patronising and was made to feel pathetic by the therapist I was seeing. I felt at times like I was speaking to a robot as there was no facial expressions/emotions expressed and all she did was repeat back what I had just said to her. I told her where I was struggling most yet she tried to work on things that were of little to no relevance in my eating disorder experience. She seemed to have no consideration for the fact that I have been through some treatment before and mostly weight restored so I had heard a lot of what she was already telling me. I had no faith in her and I think that is why I wanted to leave treatment early. (1, overall experience)

Everything above. Also, I hated the fact that weighing is compulsory- even if you don’t think that you will be affected by knowing it, the numbers play on your mind and I feel like if I know I am losing weight then the ED takes control and is happy and wants me to lose more. If I have gained weight then I feel disappointed and analyse my week to determine what went wrong. It would have been better to not weigh at all or blind weigh so that the eating disorder didn’t have something else to cling on to. (1, least helpful)

Weighing (as mentioned above). (1, more difficult)

Terrible. There wasn’t one. It was like talking to a robot. (1, relationship with therapist)

Previous experiences were better, they were informative, scientific (I find it easier to challenge thoughts if there is proper evidence to back it up) and the therapist actually listened and behaved like a human rather than being condescending and patronising. I was also in a different place at the time and was more in need of help so maybe that’s why they felt better. (1, comparison with previous therapy experiences)

Less focus on weight, more focus on the individual rather than trying to shove them into a pre-made framework that is presumed to work for everyone. (1, comments/suggestions)

Made me think a lot more about behaviours and thoughts and reasons behind and rationalising (2, overall experience)

Thinking why can’t I be size X or wear X (2, most helpful)

I felt a bit anxious over the thought of not making as much progress as I would like in the 20 sessions we are permitted (2, least helpful)

Going to a session after a rough week but I think that is general in any therapy session (2, more difficult)

A safe and open space (2, relationship with therapist)

The sessions with her felt experienced and expertise, she was equipt to initiate problem solving and implementing changes (2, comparison with previous therapy experiences)

Not really (2, comments/suggestions)

To start off with I thought it was really good and was going to be helpful and useful for me and my recovery. However, as part of this treatment I was requested to “track” everything I ate and write down my emotions and thoughts and feelings about the foods I ate and had to be in the moment with it. I tried doing this but realised quite quickly that this was not a good way of me recovering as the more I thought about the food in the moment, the more negative thoughts I had and it triggered more anxieties as I was having to overthink the food which wasn’t helpful. I relayed this several times to the therapist and explained how it was making me feel uncomfortable which I was told it had to be done and was a non negotiable. I explained that not one template fits all but I was not listened too. To try and make it as comfortable as possible for me I decided to take pictures of what I ate and then write it up and the end of the week to send back to the therapist, this seemed to work a lot better for me and the therapist was still getting what they wanted from seeing what I was eating. This was still not good enough though, even though the results were the same and I was eating a lot better. Due to this, the therapy came to an end which I think is unfortunate as I believe if we got to the later stage of the therapy where body image and self esteem was discussed I would’ve been benefited grately by this service and would feel a lot happier within my self. But because I didn’t fit the same criteria as everyone else, I was not allowed to reach this benefit and make progress in which I think is the biggest purpose of how my ED started. (3, overall experience)

Unfortunately I do not believe I managed to reach the benefits of treatment due to the therapy being stopped. If I had gone to the stage of speaking about self image, I would’ve benefited (3, most helpful)

I found the service very regimental and that it is not adapted to the individual and their needs. Taking into consideration their feelings and what is also best for them. In my case, it was the tracking. (3, least helpful)

I found the tracking difficult as it triggered the ED more as I was having to think about the food and reflect upon everything I was eating and would then at each day have to see it all back and question everything and go to bed with negative thoughts and worries because I felt like I had eaten too much. In some ways, I felt abnormal doing this as a normal person wouldn’t and I wanted to be as normal as possible. What was working for me was eating in the moment and not thinking about it but I was being asked to do the complete opposite which was impacting my mental health and feelings around food. This was discussed serval times but was unlistened too. (3, more difficult)

We had a good relationship but there was no compromise. (3, therapist relationship).

To be more tailored to the individual and the non negotiable be reassessed as one glove does not fit all and I think it’s a shame that people will lose out on full recovery if one thing is not benefiting them. (3, comments/suggestions).

with private therapy, they wont cut you off if you make no improvements because you pay them. with steps i was told i had to make improvements or i would be dropped and that gave me motivation to push through (4, comparison with previous therapy)

With this course of therapy, i felt it was the first time my health care professional truly believed i could recover. Having that reassurance and hope was an enormous strength in my treatment plan and recovery. Previously, under other eating disorder services (I switched to STEPS when i moved away from my hometown for university), i always felt like any set back in my progress would be met with a level of disappointment and frustration by my team whereas at STEPS i never felt afraid to speak openly, knowing that my team held no judgement but would rather help me through the problem to continue on success. (5, overall experience)

Treatment felt like a newer approach with many aspects i had never encountered before. I think it was helpful to guide my treatment around what we both felt was benefiting me the most. (5, most helpful)

I found some body image work the most difficult- but also the most beneficial. (5, more difficult).

She was incredibly empathetic to me and inspired so much hope in my recovery. I always felt listened to and that she was pragmatic in helping me move forward. (5, therapist relationship).

Miles better than any therapy i’ve received from any other services. (5, comparison with previous therapy)

I found the therapy to be really beneficial. Although my weight did not reflect this the sessions overall helped my confidence. I had built a good relationship with the staff member and her overall approach to my eating disorder helped me mentally and emotionally. I found that I was making progress psychologically which is why I was upset the sessions stopped because I had not gained the weight required for the trial. (6, overall experience)

I found the discussions around how I could improve my food intake very beneficial. Looking at little changes and discussing the best option of doing this. (6, most helpful)

The fact that I had to reach weight progression targets to be able to continue with the therapy programme. I found the pressure of this made my eating disorder put up barriers. It took control. I think if there was more flexibility with the weight progression my eating disorder would have been less active. (6, least helpful)

As above…. It was the focus on weight gain each week I found difficult. It allowed the demon in my head to take control. The pressure of knowing that the therapy would stop if I didn’t gain weight scared me as I was finding it so helpful in other ways. (6, more difficult)

I had a great relationship with my therapist. She was able to relate to my condition and understood my needs, she was very personal and treated me with respect and as an individual. Over the last 9 months I have been battling with the grieve of loosing 2 close family members, my mum and my nephew both suddenly. Along side this I have been trying to manage my eating disorder which has found an opportunity to get strong, it’s seen me as weak. She was able to relate to this and take this into consideration during our sessions. This gave me the confidence to open up and talk, this is the first time I have been able to do this throughout my illness. She has given me the ability to fight this demon. All be it slow I felt I was moving forward. (6, therapist relationship)

I feel that less focus should be on the weight gain each week. There should be allowance for taking into consideration other factors in the life of the service user that might be influencing barriers in weight gain. (6, comments/suggestions)

It was a fairly okay form of therapy, the worker I had was lovely and she tried but I don’t think i was able to form a connection with her the way i had in previous therapies, i also just found some of the methods uncomfortable and made me more aware of my eating disorder rather than helping to reduce patterns and behaviours (7, overall experience)

I found sometimes writing food diaries helpful, however not everyday, and I found the regular check in on weight helpful to know i was on the right track (7, most helpful)

the exposure to everything: knowing my weight consistently, constantly tracking my food intake and being vulnerable to seeing the shape and size of my body in such an uncomfortable setting and format (7, least helpful)

I found building a relationship difficult with the worker probably because we just weren’t compatible personalities but also found that when i felt uncomfortable with doing some things there wasn’t a way for me to take a different route e.g. i was uncomfortable with having to see my body in a mirror so instead the option was a computer screen, i understand the need for the exposure however felt uncomfortable in the way it was gone about and there wasn’t much sympathy towards my uncomfortablility (7, more difficult)

it was fine, we somewhat connected however compared to other therapist relationships i’ve had in the past i felt this one was very formal and i couldn’t fully express everything i wanted to out of fear of judgement, we also just didn’t click in the way i expected us to, additionally i felt slightly disregarded and some of my issues devalidated if i was to talk about previous experiences that led me to my current mindset (7, therapist relationship)

i found my previous forms of therapy more beneficial to me as they tackled the past traumas that then encouraged me to tackle the current behaviours etc however i found this one was attacking the root just the surface level issues (7, comparison with previous therapies)

maybe just working on how relationships between therapist and patient could be developed, and completely validating the person and their feelings (7, comments/suggestions)

I felt it was too strict and was not focused on the individual - rather just a set programme which does not work for everyone. (8, overall experience)

I did not get to the stage where we were going to look at pragmatic actions so cannot comment (8, most helpful)

Weekly weigh in and weight gain target unrealistic (8, least helpful)

Weigh in and feeling forced to eat more (8, more difficult)

I think as she was a lot younger it was hard to relate (8, therapist relationship)

a more individual based approach which is more flexible and trauma informed (8, comments/suggestions)

It greatly helped me to regain valuable aspects of my life including socially and professionally. Whilst it was very difficult at times I’m glad I persevered. (9, overall experience)

I found the materials to be very helpful because it was easy to refer back to them online if I ever needed to access them on a whim/in a weaker moment. (9, most helpful)

Foodplans/homework style work, not self motivated enough so was an added stress for me. (9, least helpful)

Nothing difficult per se, mainly just scary things like challenging fears.(9, more difficult)

My therapist was extremely personable and easy to get along with. I felt like she understood what I was saying and she always made me feel comfortable and like she wasn’t judgemental. (9, therapist relationship)

It helped more than I thought it would. And I managed a lot more than I thought. It was scary at times and really pushed me but now I can see why, I am in a much much much better position now (10, overall experience)

Being pushed to face fear foods and eating regularly. Surveys. Writing things out and learning the cycles and how to change them (10, most helpful)

Towards the end the food diary, more just because it was a bit of a chore to do but understand why it has to be done (10, least helpful)

During the feared food experiment due to the fear of gaining a lot of weight or losing control   
Surveys - anxious to know what people would actually say (10, more difficult)

She was really nice and easy to talk too (10, therapist relationship)

overall i have noticed a significant shift in my attitudes towards food and allowing myself to challenge fear foods as well as my thought processes. (11, overall experience)

Being able to work towards food freedom (11, most helpful)

I found food diaries particularly difficult as tracking food was what caused my ed to spiral initially (11, least helpful)

food diaries (see above) (11, more difficult)

I got on well with my therapist and felt she listened to my concerns and difficulties and helped me to overcome difficult thought processes. (11, therapist relationship)

Provided me with the knowledge on why I thought and did the things I did. All the resources were very useful and I actually enjoyed learning about myself through them. My therapist was never judgemental and always provided me with an answer to all my questions. (12, overall experience)

Understanding what a normal daily eating routine looked like because after so many years of restricting you forget what’s normal. (12, most helpful)

Some of the body image experiments such as the string one. I don’t feel like it helped me feel better about my body. (12, least helpful)

Trying to stop counting calories as it’s something that I’ve done daily for near enough 6 years, I found it the hardest part to overcome. This was made easier when given the daily eating plan as it gave me an idea of what’s normal to eat instead of relying on calories. (12, more difficult)

Really good. Always friendly and we always had a little catch up prior to starting the session. She always asked questions about my friends and family. (12, therapist relationship)

It saved my life (13, overall experience)

The psychologist always knowing what I needed to hear and which tool to direct me towards (13, most helpful)

I have a lot of other inter-related issues and it would have been very helpful to address them alongside instead of having to focus exclusively on the eating disorder. (13, least helpful)

It was very difficult to have to put on weight and give up control of my eating, weight and shape. They were what made me feel safe in the World, and giving them up was extremely traumatic and distressing. It caused me to have suicidal thoughts. It's the worst experience I've had in my life. I couldn't even have imagined anything so awful before. Now I'm out the other end it was absolutely worth it, but still... (13, more difficult)

My therapist was amazing. I feel incredibly fortunate to have been treated by her. (13, therapist relationship)

This was orders of magnitude better than any other therapy I've had. (13, comparison with other therapies)

It would be great if it were possible to treat other mental conditions alongside the eating disorder, and to provide more emotional support through re-nourishing. (13, comments/suggestions)

I was rather hesitant going into this due to a previous experience with CAMHS not going well but I have no regrets trying this CBT course. My therapist really helped me understand my ED and how to battle it, I felt heard and understood which I hadn’t felt with my previous treatment with CAMHS. Naturally, there were some rough patches, but with the help from my therapist, it didn’t feel too difficult to overcome. Going over everything each week, with the odd questionnaire, really helped me see what an improvement I was making and how my mood, weight, and opinion of myself had gradually started to improve.

Overall, I think the course is effective, especially if you get along with your therapist. (14, overall experience)

I found my connection with my therapist the most helpful. I felt understood, heard and most importantly, I felt comfortable. I was able to talk about things that I would usually keep to myself. The opinions and different outlooks I was given really helped me to understand my ED, feelings and mindsets. (14, most helpful)

Personally, I didn’t find the food diaries helpful. I understood why they were needed, but having to write down everything I ate and drank made me want to limit my intake. After completing the CBT and not using the diaries anymore, I find eating a lot easier as I don’t have to physically look at how much I’ve eaten per day. (14, least helpful)

I found trying to change my core beliefs to be rather difficult as these were things I had stuck to for years. I filled out the core belief sheets multiple times, they helped a little but not much. Changing a core belief takes time and I’m still working on them now, outside of the CBT treatment. But I wouldn’t have been able to start this change without the treatment. (14, more difficult)

I had a very good relationship with my therapist. I was comfortable to talk freely with them, I felt heard and understood. I was originally pretty hesitant to open up, but as I became more comfortable, it felt easier. (14, therapist experience)

My first experience wasn’t very good. It was all about gaining weight, nothing about how I felt or how I was struggling. They just wanted me to gain weight.   
But this round of treatment felt easier, better. I believe this is because I was listened to, my therapist listened to how I was feeling and what made me feel uncomfortable and how to overcome certain feelings. This course of therapy wasn’t completely focused on gaining weight. (14, comparison with previous therapy)

Positive and helped me feel that recovery is possible. (15, overall experience)

Being held accountable and to know what a healthy weight and diet should be. (15, most helpful)

I would have liked some more sessions to be able to just talk more about the reasons/events that triggered the ED. I guess just some talking therapy rather than consistent CBT. (15, least helpful)

The realisation that what I experienced with ED wasn't reality. Around 4 weeks in, I genuinely thought that I had put on weight as I could feel it and see it. When I had my weigh-in, I discovered I had infact lost weight. This really impacted my sense of reality and I found it hard to be at home alone in the weeks that followed as it was an unnerving time. (15, more difficult)

Positive. I would have liked to complete the whole treatment with her, but I understand that people move on and need to do so! (15, therapist experience)

I didn't attend the previous therapy courses as I didn't want to recover at that time. This time I wanted to attempt to move on from ED patterns/behaviours. (15, comparison with previous therapy)

Maybe a few more Talking Therapy sessions? It felt like there was more of a focus on the CBT form filling activities, but at times I just wanted to be able to talk through what triggered me with a therapist. (15, comments/suggestions)

This course of therapy was the best thing that happened to me. At first I didn’t want to attend at all but my parents pushed me to try it out and I am so glad that I listened to them. I have been suffering with an ed since a really long time and now my intense thoughts have dropped a lot thanks to the help of STEPS. My firsts sessions were scary because I’m not used to talk about my problems but they made me feel secure to open up and I am truly greatful. I started at 42kg and now I am nearly in 48.8kg it may be just a little gain weight but I’m still trying to get better! (16, overall experience)

I found the background of each food component information really useful. They made me understand why fats, carbs and protein are what our body needs and it’s not my enemy. They explain to me how each component work for each different part of the body and how it fuels me. What to eat really helped me as well. (16, most helpful)

I truly did not find anything not helpful. The only thing was that sometimes I struggled to gain weight and I was really stressed to be on the same weight for around 2 months eating more but nothing. But nothing else. (16, least helpful)

Eating more In general was very difficult. At first I thought I was eating more but then they told me I needed to eat even bigger portions and that part was hard, not only because of the voice of my head but because my body was not use to it that much, sometimes I felt nauseas but I got through it. Getting snacks between breakfast, lunch and dinner was also a challenge. (16, more difficult)

My therapist is the best person ever. She has an amazing big heart and tried to help as much as she can. She made me feel really safe and not to feel ashamed of my condition. She truly underhanded were everything came from and tried to explain to me how to cope and solve the problem. Her guidance for amazing and I am extremely greatful once again. (16, therapist experience)

I only had a therapist but it was not specifically focused on food. Therefore it was diferent. (16, comparison with previous therapy)

Nothing it’s really good. (16, comments/suggestions)