



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

Psychotherapy

via telehealth video-conferencing to treat anxiety



Introduction

Anxiety represents one of the most common mental health problems in the population, and can be experienced by people of any age. Anxiety influences a person's overall wellbeing and quality of life.

What are the components of anxiety?

- Emotional: feeling on edge, irritability, feelings of fear, dread and worry.
- Behavioural: being easily distracted, avoiding situations, worrisome thoughts, and being easily startled.
- Cognitive: persistent negative thoughts and intrusive worries, difficulties with concentration, focus and memory.
- Physical: increased heart rate, sweating, shaking, feeling of nausea and dizziness, muscle tension or pains, and having trouble sleeping.

Some activities, events or general circumstances can be naturally anxiety provoking for most people, and can be successfully overcome. However, some situations can be too intense or unexpected that anxiety can be difficult to cope with and manage.

Anxiety becomes a problem when it starts to significantly impact on a person's life. For example, when it makes them adjust their routine to avoid certain activities or situations, or when it makes them feel preoccupied and overwhelmed with fear, worries or ruminations, making it difficult to focus on anything else.

Anxiety can also be induced when exposed to ongoing stress, such as the current situation surrounding COVID-19. When exposed to stress for a long time, it might trigger similar responses to those listed above.

Recognising anxiety symptoms is therefore an important step towards learning new techniques to positively cope with experiences of anxiety, worry, and stress.

Research Objectives

Our study aims to test a new psychotherapeutic intervention delivered via video-conferencing to help combat anxiety in people living with cognitive impairment, irrespective of their location. Our 6-week program combines education about anxiety to help people understand their symptoms, relaxation techniques to help cope with anxiety.

Study design

The psychotherapy program will be tested in a randomised control trial. This means that if you are eligible to participate in the study, you will be randomly assigned to an intervention group or a control group. If you are selected to the intervention group, you will be asked to attend 6 weekly sessions of psychotherapy. If you are in the control group, you will continue your usual care as prior to entering the study.

How can I participate?

If you have been diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment or dementia and if you are currently experiencing any anxiety symptoms similar to what has been described above, we invite you to participate. We will do an initial screen to check your eligibility for our study. Participation in our study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point.

What equipment do I need to participate?

You will need an internet connection and a device to perform video-conferencing. This device can be a computer with a web camera, a tablet, iPad or smart phone.

What help is available if I have never used video-conferencing?

We will provide you with a manual with clear instructions, a video link with step by step instructions, and support over the phone to help you setup your equipment for video-conferencing.

What's required from participants?

- Filling out questionnaires before, and after the therapy.
- Participating in weekly therapy sessions for 6 weeks delivered via video-conferencing.
- Practise techniques learnt in therapy sessions.
- Give us feedback on the ease of use of technology as well as the content of the therapeutic sessions.

What's required from a support person?

We also invite a support person to participate, if you have one. A support person can be your partner, spouse, family member, friend or anyone who identifies as your carer. Support persons are not required to live with you. They can join your therapy session remotely via video-conferencing.

The support person is encouraged to participate in therapy sessions and practise the introduced techniques with you (e.g. deep breathing techniques for relaxation).

Support persons will also be given a questionnaire to complete before and after the intervention.

Your participation and feedback will help us improve this program

Participants to receive a gift voucher You will be given a \$50 electronic gift card at completion of baseline assessments and another \$50 electronic gift card at completion of the entirety of the trial, regardless of whether you have been allocated to the intervention group or control group.

Dementia and Neuro Mental Health Research Unit

The Dementia and Neuro Mental Health Research Unit led by Dr Nadeeka Dissanayaka, is part of The University of Queensland Centre for Clinical Research. We facilitate a pipeline of clinical research programs to meet the increasing demands of our growing ageing population and age-related progressive brain diseases such as Dementia and Parkinson's disease. This project is conducted in collaboration with School of Psychology, UQ. Our goal is to accelerate discovery of treatment and improve quality of life for patients, and their families.

Acknowledgment

We thank Lions for their continuous support, and all study participants for their involvement.

Contact

Dr Nadeeka Dissanayaka
BSc (Hons1), PhD, Senior Research Fellow NHMRC Boosting Dementia Research Leadership Fellow Head, Dementia and Neuro Mental Health Research Unit, The University of Queensland Centre for Clinical Research Faculty of Medicine

If you are interested in participating, fill out this online [form](#).

You can also contact us on the following numbers:

T: 07 3346 5036 or 07 3346 5577

E: anxietyresearch@uq.edu.au

W: clinical-research.centre.uq.edu.au/psychotherapy-telehealth-video-conferencing-treat-anxiety



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA



CREATE CHANGE