

FOUNDATION CERTIFICATE IN COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (Trinity College Dublin and St Patrick's University Hospital)

Background

I work as a Senior Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) in a Community CAMHS team in the Dublin Mid-Leinster region. Due to changing demands on services and increased focus on mental health promotion for young people, my role as an SLT in CAMHS has changed significantly. In particular, CAMHS in Ireland now accept referrals of young people up to age 17 and this is to be increased to 18 years of age; I therefore have an increasing amount of older adolescents on my caseload.

To deal with issues of increased waiting lists and equitable service provision, many teams (including the CAMHS team on which I work) have adopted the Choice and Partnership Approach (CAPA). CAPA promotes the use of both Core and Specialist work and as an SLT, my training and skills are predominantly in the Specialist region. However, I became interested in developing my Core skills, both to support my team's overall waiting list reduction and in particular, as I saw an overlap between the skill-set of an SLT and many of the Core skills required of the team, e.g. parenting work, psycho-education of families around mental health diagnoses and supporting young people with ASD and co-morbid mental health needs. In particular, I became interested in the area of CBT. As a "talking therapy", communication is obviously central to CBT and it is a frontline treatment recommended by NICE Guidelines for a range of mental health diagnoses. I therefore decided to pursue further training in this area, to develop my skills and confidence as a mental health practitioner and to support my current work with young people with communication needs and co-morbid mental health diagnoses.

Background to the Course

The Foundation Course in CBT in its current format has run since October 2008. It offers a broad and comprehensive introduction to CBT in affiliation with Trinity College Dublin (TCD). The course is mainly aimed at mental health professionals or equivalent, with an interest in CBT. The course aims to:

- 1) function as the first year of a proposed four year cognitive behavioural psychotherapy MSc programme at TCD, for those meeting criteria for progression
- 2) offer a comprehensive introduction to CBT principles for clinicians who want to understand and use CBT principles in their day to day clinical roles, without becoming accredited cognitive behavioural psychotherapists
- 3) offer a comprehensive grounding in CBT principles for clinicians with an interest in pursuing a CBT clinical qualification and accreditation in the future

The course is run in St. Patrick's University Hospital, Dublin. Course content includes lectures on general CBT skills as well as an introduction to disorder-specific models of CBT, including those for anxiety, depression and OCD.

Progress on the Course

I began attending the Foundation Course in October 2013 and after approximately 20 days of lectures and several days of continuing assessment and exams, completed the certificate in June 2014. The course content has been extremely useful and relevant to my work in CAMHS. The course is a mix of workshops, lectures and self-practice, which enabled me over the progression of the course to begin to use the skills I am learning both in my professional and personal life. In particular, in my work with young people in CAMHS, I am more focused on enabling them to come up with their own goals and developing a joint understanding of their needs, in keeping with CBT principles such as Socratic questioning and formulation. I have also begun working more directly with young people with specific mental health diagnoses, in particular, those with anxiety disorders. Using my knowledge of communication and my increasing knowledge of CBT models, I feel I am now delivering a more comprehensive and appropriate service to these young people and their families. I still have a long way to go but am already considering further training in CBT to continue this journey. I received a high mark in the overall assessment of the course, coming first in my class, which I hope will function as a solid stepping stone from which to seek further training in this area.

Thanks and Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the FPSA for their generous funding of my attendance at this course which otherwise would likely not have been possible. This course has been invaluable and I look forward to continuing to develop my skills and knowledge of CBT to enhance my work with adolescents with mental health needs.

Anna McLeod
Senior Speech and Language Therapist
Linn Dara CAMHS, Dublin Mid-Leinster