

Addressing emotion regulation in the treatment of chronic back pain

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There is a marked co-occurrence between chronic pain and emotional problems that has proven difficult to address parsimoniously and effectively with available treatment options. This presentation will exemplify treatment development within the context of the fear and avoidance model of chronic pain and exposure treatment. Specifically, building on recent efforts to more explicitly address emotion regulation in pain treatment, the development of a hybrid treatment targeting emotion regulation mechanisms will be detailed. This treatment model is based on a so-called “transdiagnostic” approach, rooted in the idea that chronic pain and emotional problems share certain cognitive and behavioral processes that maintain and contribute to the exacerbation of the observed comorbidities. This presentation will outline the theoretical background and evidence base as well as detail the treatment methods and provide context for reflection on how cross theoretical integration may result in treatment methods that better prepare patients for exposure and activation and ultimately improve our treatment results. The presentation will specifically highlight two areas of relevance: how to build patient engagement and bridge the gap between theory and patient experience and how to provide patients with more and better tools to cope with distress.