Reviewer’s report

Title: Efficacy of an Internet-based Exposure treatment for Flying Phobia (NO-FEAR Airlines) with and without therapist guidance: A randomized controlled trial

Version: 0 Date: 04 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Adrian Alacreu-Crespo

Reviewer's report:

The paper entitled "Efficacy of an Internet-based Exposure treatment for Flying Phobia (NO-FEAR Airlines) with and without therapist guidance: A randomized controlled trial" test a novel exposure therapy computerized using two groups (with and without therapy guidance) for treat specific flying phobia. Their results showed the therapy as effective in decreasing the scores of specific phobia, clinical severity, fear and avoidance scales and change diagnostic status at post-treatment when is compared to a waiting list group. Also, the changes were maintained after 1 year. Regarding both therapy groups there are only significance differences at 1 year follow up in the fear and belief scales to the target behavior (Flying) showing better scores the group with therapy guidance. In general the design of the study is well conducted, and there are a big effort in the statistics performed using adequadetly the mixed-models analysis. Results are interesting and novel for clinical psychology. However, I have some questions and recommendations for the authors:

Introduction: Introduction is well-writtten and provided sufficient information to guide the reader to the research question

Methods: A big strenght of the paper is that methodology was pre-publicated, then the design is well stablished and there are not too much errors. However I want to point a few issues for methodology:

1. Regarding study design, in the flow-chart (figure 1) you have a little error about sample, in the 3-month follow up for the guided group you have 7 patients and in the 12 month 8 patients. About the design, you realocated the waiting list group in one of the two conditions of therapy, did you performed the follow up of this patients after the therapy? Maybe if you introduct the results for this patients after the therapy you can increase the sample for the follow up and found differences between both groups of therapy.

2. About participants, an inclusion criteria is to have adequate knowledge to understand and read Spanish, how did you evaluate that? I ask this because you have two patients from USA and Italy where Spanish is not the mother language. Moreover, there are patients from south-america, although theire language is Spanish sometimes there are words and expressions with different meaning between countries that would lead to misunderstandings during the application of intervention or the answers in the different psychometric test. This issue can be a limitation?
3. Regarding intervention, patients have only 6 weeks to complete the intervention there are patients who not completed all the exposure scenarios? Do you have a measure of how many time patients usually need to complete it? There are differences between the guide group vs the not guided in this issue?

4. In statistics you performed pairwise comparisons, did you apply a correction for the degrees of freedom? If not, there are a lot of comparisons increasing the possibilites of commit a type 1 error.

Results: About results I have a couple of issues

1. See the sub-section title "Baseline data and participant characteristics Error! reference source not found" seems like an erro from the reference software. In the table 1, you can include how the participants are distributed in function if their are Spanish vs Foreign and if there are significant differences between groups using chi-square.

2. Also when you said that there are not significant results you must declare a p value (eg. page 11 line 56-57 "There were not statistically significance differences between the two treatment groups at post-treatment" you can put, all p > .05).

3. In secondary outcomes you say that there are not significant changes for waiting group list comparing pre- and post- treatment measure, however the CI 95 % for the fear scale not include 0, that show a possible significant effect, is that significant?.

Discussion: In general conclusions are well explained and results are well discussed, I only have a question for the authors.

1. Results show the same effectiveness of therapy with and without therapeutic guide, that contradict some studies of the superiority of guide interventions. In pages 14 and 15 you explain well the reasons for those differences (1. well design of intervention, 2. initial phone call for all participants, 3. differences in the disorder addressed, 4. long-term benefits of therapist guidance). But, maybe another explanation could be that the intervention is insufficient to provide a significant result, are the authors base the guidance protocol in previous studies? can be this a reason of the lack of differences?
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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