

Service users' experiences of occupation-focused Cognitive Remediation Therapy (CRT) programme within an Aotearoa New Zealand Mental Health Service

Dr Katrina Wallis- Health New Zealand Waitematā, Dr Margaret Jones-Auckland University of Technology New Zealand, Associate Professor Dr Kirk Reed- Deakin University Melbourne Australia

No financial disclosures



Background

- Service Users' unaddressed cognitive difficulties (Kake et. al, 2016)
- Evidenced-based intervention: CRT (Vita, et. al, 2023)
- Need for an Occupational-focus
- Need for research to be undertaken in real world clinical settings
- International Guidelines (Galletly et.al, 2014); (Norman et. al, 2017); (Kilaspay et. al, 2021); (World Health Organisation, 2023)
- Study Aim: To understand people's experiences of the delivery of the programme and factors that influenced and shaped the delivery.



Methodology and Design

- Qualitative Constructivist Case Study (Stake,1995)
- The Case: One team, delivering two 16 week programmes over 18 months
- Interviews with
 - 4 Organisational Leaders/managers,
 - 5 Therapists
 - 4 Service Users - 3 were Māori
- Document Review
- Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
- Maori elder (Kaumāuta) , input into Study design and themes
- Themes: Waka (Maori boat)

Findings: Main Theme: Making Way

The boat is moving through the water. It has forward motion, it is not stuck in one place or drifting

- *“Now I’m living more independently I know I have the skills to think for myself”. (Fiona)*
- *“I’ve found it [the programme] really beneficial; I feel more confident in myself that I’m doing something for me. My thinking is clearer, and I feel more on the ball” (Susan).*



Subtheme 1: Lifting the anchor

The boat is no longer held in place and can start its journey

- *“I was inquisitive, I thought to myself, well it might better myself, I thought I’ll give it a go, it sounded interesting” (Susan).*
- *“I was curious to know how to learn and how to solve problems and to get better.... Maybe it could help me get a better job” (Peter).*



Subtheme 2: Experiencing Learning

Experiencing Learning by doing, learning skills

- *You know it's been a real learning curve; it's been really beneficial” (Fiona)*
- *“Improving my memory helped me with learning how to do my work tasks better” (Peter)*



Subtheme 3: Enjoying the Challenge

Moving forward in challenging conditions

- *I think that is what kept me coming back, thinking maybe I'll try it again another way and see how it works this time. The challenge made me want to do it more" (Greg).*
- *"I want to get better at things and that's the challenge that's why its enjoyable to do" (Susan)*



Subtheme 4: Being at the Helm

Steering the boat and making decisions about its direction

- *“they stepped back and let me do a lot of the thinking, got me thinking about the tasks and which is the best way to do them you know the strategies and stuff” (Greg).*
- *“she would say so much, and I would have to figure out the rest” (Peter).*



Subtheme 5: Expanding Horizons

Sailing beyond familiar waters.

- *“CRT helps me to achieve goals ... its helped me to have something to strive for. This will help me get a full-time job and I’ll get a car once I’ve nailed the job” (Greg).*
- *“I’m approaching things with a bit more hands on and getting involved” (Peter).*





Conclusion

Key Aspects of Delivery from Service Users Perspectives

- Personal relevance
 - Challenging
 - Enjoyable
 - Learning
 - Flexibility
 - Feeling in control
 - Hope
- Occupation-focus is essential in CRT delivery
 - Occupational therapist are well suited to deliver the programme
 - Prioritise into routine care
 - Service Users voice in shaping service delivery

References and Thank You

- Bowie, C. R., Bell, M. D., Fiszdon, J. M., Johannesen, J. K., Lindenmayer, J.-P., McGurk, S. R., Medalia, A. A., Penades, R., Saperstein, A. M., Twamley, E. W., Ueland, T., & Wykes, T. (2020). Cognitive remediation for schizophrenia: An expert working group white paper on core techniques. *Schizophrenia Research* 215, 49-53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.schres.2019.10.047>
- Galletly, C., Castle, D., Dark, F., Humberstone, V., Jablensky, A., Killackey, E., Kulkarni, J., McGorry, P., Nielssen, O., & Tran, N. (2015). Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists' clinical practice guidelines for the management of schizophrenia and related disorders. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 50(5), 410-472. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867416641195>
- Take, T. R., Te Aonui, M., & Garrett, N. (2016). Cognitive neuropsychological functioning in New Zealand Māori diagnosed with schizophrenia. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 50(6), 566-576. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867415607986>
- Killaspy, H., Baird, G., Bromham, N., & Bennett, A. (2021). Rehabilitation for adults with complex psychosis: Summary of NICE guidance. *The British Medical Journal*, 372, Art. n1. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1>
- Norman, R., Lecomte, T., Addington, D., & Anderson, E. (2017). Canadian treatment guidelines on psychosocial treatment of schizophrenia in adults. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 62(9), 617-623. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0706743717719894>
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. SAGE.
- Vita, A., Barlati, S., Ceraso, A., Deste, G., Nibbio, G., & Wykes, T. (2023). Acceptability of cognitive remediation for schizophrenia: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Psychological Medicine*, 53(8), 3661-3671. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291722000319>
- Wallis, K., Jones, M., Reed, K. (2025). Delivery of an occupation-focused Cognitive Remediation Therapy Programme in an Aotearoa New Zealand Public Mental Health: Case Study Research [Doctoral thesis, Auckland University of Technology]. Auckland University of Technology Open Thesis & Dissertations, openrepository.aut.ac.nz
- World Health Organization. (2023). *Package of intervention for rehabilitation: Module eight: Mental health conditions*. Author. Retrieved August 18, 2023, from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240071285>

- Contact: Dr Katrina Wallis katrina.wallis@waitematadhb.govt.nz and LinkedIn