

## EVALUATION OF TREATMENT OUTCOME STUDIES RATING GUIDE

### General Information

The following rating guide is intended to aid your critical evaluation of published treatment outcome research. Although a good deal of subjective judgment is required, the listed criteria can serve as a rough guide to rating the quality of study characteristics as fair, good, or excellent. With the exception of design characteristics, the criteria for each characteristic rating include the criteria for the lower rating and the additional criteria of the relevant rating. Subjective judgment is necessary, as no specific expectation is made that most or all of the criteria for each rating need be met to achieve a rating. The following symbols may be used to designate the rating of different study characteristics:

- ⊖ = no information available to base judgment
- ⊗ = below minimum standards
- = poor to fair, minimally acceptable
- ◐ = good
- = excellent

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### Design

- Pre-post design; pseudoexperimental design; absence of control group (unless comparison treatment is well established "gold standard")
- ◐ No-treatment (wait-list) comparison; treatment-as-usual design (if TAU poorly specified); comparative design (if comparative treatments unbalanced or poorly specified)
- Non-specific design (attention placebo); comparative design (if comparative treatment is well-specified and balanced); dismantling or additive design; parametric design (e.g., dose-response)

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### Methodology

- Minimal specification of treatment; statistical control of client variables in absence of random assignment
- ◐ Treatment manual; session parameters specified and controlled; expectancy/credibility checks
- Adherence ratings; expert supervision or ratings of competence

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### Sample Characteristics

- Specified problem; specified method of assessment; adequate reporting of demographics
- ◐ Inclusion/exclusion criteria clearly specified; severity level of problem reported
- Structured interview or similarly valid diagnostic system; sample diversity reflects prevalence rates (if known); use of well-established diagnostic system (e.g., DSM-IV)

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### Therapist Characteristics

- Minimal specifications; single therapist or therapists assigned to only one condition; minimally trained therapists (e.g., graduate students)
- ◐ Regular supervision; expert therapists assigned to preferred condition
- Balanced therapist bias (therapists provide treatment in all conditions); expert supervision balanced across conditions; assessment and reporting of therapist effects

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## Dependent Variable Considerations

- Reliable and valid assessment of at least a single domain (example: BDI only assessment); immediate post-therapy assessment only
- Multiple domain assessment; multiple method assessment; short-term follow-up only (< 6 months)
- Independent assessors blind to condition; multiple independent assessors; assessor characteristics described

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## Data Analysis

- Minimal statistics reported for statistical analyses; descriptive statistics reported both pre- and post-treatment; non-conservative tests (e.g., no correction for multiple tests)
- Randomization checks; multivariate analyses; conservative tests (e.g., Bonferroni corrections for multiple tests); inclusion of effect size estimates
- Statistical control for pre-treatment differences; discussion of statistical power (if non-significant differences); inclusion of clinical significance analysis