

Letter to Editor Globalization and the Cognitive-behavioral Therapies



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There is little doubt that the Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies (CBTs) have become one of the primary approaches to mental health in the world. There is a large database that supports the efficacy of the CBTs for a range of disorders [1], and some authors have gone so far to declare the CBTs the “gold standard” for specific disorders [2]. In addition, while many of the CBT models were first developed in Western countries, they have now been culturally adapted and for promoted for widespread global use [3].

The promotion of the CBTs and their global growth has happened in the absence of much strategy or systemic planning. There have been regional CBT conferences, and notably those of the European Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Therapies (EACBT), as well as global conferences on a tri-annual basis offered by each of the World Congress Committee and the International Association of Cognitive Psychotherapies. Unfortunately, the World Congress Committee is only a loose agreement among several partners to hold a world congress (the next in Berlin, Germany, in June, 2019; see <http://www.wcbct2019.org>). There has been no truly global organization that represents the wide range of contemporary approaches to CBT.

It is the hope of this working group that a new global entity will soon emerge. The World Confederation of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (WCBCT; a working title) is envisioned as a global organization of organizations. Its proposed structure would include representation from

different regional CBT organizations (e.g. EABCT, the Asian Association of CBT, the Latin American Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies- ALAMOC), which in turn represent a large number of national CBT organizations within their geographical area. There has been a working group of members, including the current author, who have been developing a proposal and getting response from regional organizations. Our hope is that the new WCBCT can officially start its activities as of the World Congress in 2019.

The WCBCT will support the development of CBT worldwide. There are a number of countries that do not yet have a national CBT organization, so the early goal is to promote this development where it makes sense. It is hoped that once enough national organizations exist in Africa, for example, An African Association of CBT might also form there. The WCBCT can also facilitate the development of the CBTs as a scientific discipline and professional activity across the world. The intention is to develop a website with connections to studies and experts who can facilitate the training of professionals and delivery of services. In doing so, the WCBCT hopes to become an effective agent to help develop and disseminate the CBTs. The notion is that all variations and models of CBT will be captured with the regional structure of the WCBCT, and so the confederation can foster effective working alliances among countries to maximize a focus on research, training, clinical practice, and dissemination of CBT.

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In case of success, the World Confederation will be able to work with other governmental and non-governmental organizations, such as the World Health Organization, UNESCO or the Red Cross/ Green Crescent. It is easy to imagine a global alliance of CBT clinicians who are prepared to share resources, conduct training, or respond directly to global disasters. In a world that is “getting smaller” due to global communications, available travel and international effects such as global warming, there is an urgent need for effective leadership and communication. Indeed, there is even a role for cognitive-behavioral principles and processes in international negotiations themselves [4]. Therefore this Organizing Committee hopes that the WCBCT will become an effective voice for the CBTs and evidence-based therapies in general, and as a consequence improve the lives of citizens in all parts of the world.

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