

IS THE NEUROLINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING INTERVENTION RAPID PHOBIA CURE EFFECTIVE FOR FEAR OF HEIGHTS? A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL (RCT)

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Aim: The evidence base for Neurolinguistics Programming (NLP) therapies is limited and the therapies are controversial. We wished to evaluate the effectiveness of the rapid phobia cure (RPC), a popular NLP technique, in an RCT. The RPC has had no clinical trial evaluation.

Conference theme addressed: Clinical management. It deals with equity by offering a rapid treatment for phobias.

Methods: Participants needed a score of >29 on the Heights Interpretation Questionnaire (HIQ). The design was an RCT with concealed randomisation and blinded to other participants' intervention. The intervention was a single "rapid phobia cure" session or a control group with a 15 minute meditation. The outcome was the proportion of participants with a score <26 on the HIQ at 8 weeks on an emailed questionnaire to maintain blinding. The intervention requires the participants, in their imagination, to run a movie forward, in black and white, of a fearful experience and then backward in colour. They do this three times or more until the fear of heights is diminished.

Results: 98 (92%) returned their questionnaire and were included in the intention to treat analysis. The proportion of participants with an HIQ score < 26 was 34.6% (18/52) in the intervention group and 15.2% (7/46) in the control group RR=2.26, 95% CI (1.05, 4.95) and (p=0.028). The number needed to treat was six 95% CI (3 to 36). The intervention takes less than 15 minutes in actual practice.

Conclusions: This is the first RCT of the rapid phobia treatment. It is brief, easily learnt, safe, low cost and probably effective.