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Assessment of contemporary social phobia verbal report instruments[☆]

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Abstract

The Social Phobia Scale (SPS), the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) and the Social Phobia and Anxiety Inventory (SPAI) were compared to each other and evaluated in patients with social phobia. We examined the relationship of these three contemporary social phobia verbal report instruments with each other, as well as with behavioral and self-report cognitive criteria. As expected, the three social phobia scales were significantly intercorrelated, although they differed in their relationship to the behavioral and cognitive measures. Specifically, the SPS had a significant negative relationship with time spent in a speech behavioral assessment test. The higher the anxiety scores were on the SPS, the less

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time patients spent giving an impromptu speech in front of a small audience. The SIAS was consistently related to negative and positive self-reported thoughts in speech and conversation behavioral assessment tests. All instruments differentiated patients with speech phobia from those having both generalized social phobia and avoidant personality disorder; only the SPAI and the SIAS, however, distinguished the former group from individuals with generalized social phobia but no without avoidant personality disorder. All three social phobia instruments were sensitive to treatment changes. Results are discussed in terms of the relative utility of each of these measures' total scores and any and their subscales. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Although social phobia was once labeled 'the neglected anxiety disorder' (Liebowitz et al., 1985), research on social phobia has increased greatly over the past decade and has led to a broadened understanding of this disorder. This increased attention has highlighted the need for careful and thorough assessments and has spurred the development of empirically derived self-report instruments (McNeil et al., 1995). There are several scales of historical importance in the assessment of social anxiety and phobia. The Marks and Mathews (1979) Fear Questionnaire contains a social phobia subscale that measures avoidance of social situations. Other older but commonly used instruments include the Social Avoidance and Distress Scale (SAD; Watson and Friend, 1969), the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (FNE; Watson and Friend, 1969) and the Personal Report of Confidence as a Speaker (PRCS; Paul, 1966). Recently, empirically derived instruments specifically designed for the assessment of social phobia have been introduced in the literature: the Social Phobia Scale (SPS; Mattick and Clarke, in press), the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS; Mattick and Clarke, in press) and the Social Phobia and Anxiety Inventory (SPAI; Turner et al., 1989). These scales overcome a number of the inadequacies of the previous scales (Cox and Swinson, 1995; McNeil et al., 1995) and are reviewed below.

1.1. Social Phobia Scale and Social Interaction Anxiety Scale

Mattick and Clarke (in press) designed the SPS and the SIAS to be used together in the assessment of social phobia. The SPS assesses fears of being scrutinized or observed by others, while the SIAS measures anxiety concerning interpersonal interactions. In a recent study, Norton et al. (1997) suggested that individuals who score highly on the SPS fear their anxiety symptoms and the possible harmful consequences associated with these symptoms, while individuals who score high on the SIAS are more fearful of social stimuli in general. Recently, the two scales have been published in a chapter on the assessment of social phobia (Cox and Swinson, 1995).

Mattick and Clarke (in press) report good internal consistency and high test–retest correlations for the SPS and SIAS in a sample of untreated patients who met criteria for social phobia as defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 3rd edition (DSM-III; APA, 1980). Significant positive correlations were recorded between the SPS, SIAS and other verbal report measures of social anxiety. The SPS alone (Mattick and Peters, 1988)

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