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Group cognitive behavioral therapy for patients with generalized social anxiety disorder in Japan: outcomes at 1-year follow up and outcome predictors

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Social anxiety disorder (SAD) often referred to as social phobia is one of the most common psychiatric disorders worldwide. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is an effective treatment option for patients with SAD. In the present study, we examined the efficacy of group CBT for patients with generalized SAD in Japan at 1-year follow-up and investigated predictors with regard to outcomes.

This study was conducted as a single-arm, naturalistic, follow-up study in a routine Japanese clinical setting. A total of 113 outpatients with generalized SAD participated in group CBT from July 2003 to August 2010 and were assessed at follow-ups for up to 1 year. Primary outcome was the total score on the Social Phobia Scale/Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SPS/SIAS) at 1 year. Possible baseline predictors were investigated using mixed-model analyses.

Among the 113 patients, 70 completed the assessment at the 1-year follow-up. The SPS/SIAS scores showed significant improvement throughout the follow-ups for up to 1 year. The effect sizes of SPS/SIAS at the 1-year follow-up were 0.68 (95% confidence interval 0.41-0.95)/0.76 (0.49-1.03) in the intention-to-treat group and 0.77 (0.42-1.10)/0.84 (0.49-1.18) in completers. Older age at baseline, late onset, and lower severity of SAD were significantly associated with good outcomes as a result of mixed-model analyses.

Group CBT resulted in improvements in Japanese patients with generalized SAD, and these improvements were maintained for up to 1 year after group CBT. We showed that older age at baseline, late onset, and lower severity of SAD were predictors of good outcome at 1-year follow-up for group CBT.