

# Crt Therapy Mental Health

## Original Article

## AUSTRALASIAN PSYCHIATRY

### Implementing cognitive remediation therapy (CRT) in a mental health service: staff training

Australasian Psychiatry  
1-6  
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DOI: 10.1177/1039856215604486  
apy.sagepub.com  


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#### Abstract

**Objective:** This paper describes the establishment of training in cognitive remediation for psychosis within a community mental health service.

**Methods:** Clinical staff working in the community of a mental health service were surveyed to ascertain their interest in cognitive aspects of psychosis and skills training in cognitive remediation (CR). Based on the results of the survey a tiered training programme was established with attendance figures reported for each level of training. Fidelity assessment was conducted on the five CR programmes operating.

**Results:** Of 106 clinical staff working in the community with people diagnosed with a psychotic illness 51 completed the survey (48% response rate). The training needs varied with all 106 staff receiving the fundamental (mandatory) training and 51 staff receiving CR facilitator training. Thirty three percent of staff trained as facilitators were delivering CR.

**Conclusions:** Up skilling the mental health workforce to incorporate an understanding of the cognitive aspects of psychosis into care delivery can be facilitated by a tiered training structure. Fundamental training on the psychosocial aspects of psychosis can act as a platform for focussed CR skills based training. There is also a need for accessible therapy based supervision for staff wishing to develop competencies as CR therapists.

**Keywords:** cognitive remediation, evidence-based practice, staff training, implementation

Cognitive deficits occur in around 75-95% of people diagnosed with schizophrenia.<sup>1</sup> Cognitive remediation (CR) is an evidenced-based therapy which improves cognitive functioning in people with psychosis through behavioural-based interventions focussed on cognitive processes such as attention, memory and planning.<sup>2</sup> CR is not routinely available within Australian mental health services.<sup>3</sup> The lack of skilled practitioners and poor attitudes of staff to evidence-based practice (EBP) exemplify the organisational challenges involved in implementing CR.<sup>4</sup>

Delivery of training programmes within a mental health service can achieve sustained access to EBP and enhance the 'fit' of the therapy to the practice context.<sup>5</sup> A system approach to skills enhancement considers the service

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**CRT therapy mental health** is an innovative and evolving approach designed to assist individuals in managing their mental health challenges. With the rising prevalence of mental health disorders globally, effective therapeutic interventions have become crucial for improving the quality of life for many. Cognitive Remediation Therapy (CRT) is increasingly recognized as a beneficial treatment modality, particularly for those experiencing cognitive deficits associated with various mental health conditions. This article will delve into the intricacies of CRT therapy, exploring its methodology, benefits, applications, and future directions in mental health.

## What is CRT Therapy?

Cognitive Remediation Therapy is a structured therapeutic approach aimed at improving cognitive functions such as attention, memory, and problem-solving skills. Initially developed for individuals with schizophrenia, CRT has been adapted for use in various mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, and traumatic brain injury. The therapy is typically delivered in both individual and group settings and can be integrated with other therapeutic modalities, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or medication.

## **Key Components of CRT Therapy**

CRT therapy is characterized by several core components that contribute to its effectiveness:

1. **Assessment of Cognitive Deficits:** Before commencing therapy, a comprehensive evaluation is conducted to identify specific cognitive deficits. This assessment helps tailor the therapy to the individual's needs.
2. **Targeted Cognitive Training:** CRT focuses on enhancing specific cognitive domains through targeted exercises and tasks. This may include improving memory, executive functioning, and attention skills.
3. **Generalization of Skills:** One of the primary goals of CRT is to help individuals transfer the skills learned during therapy to real-life situations. This is achieved through practical exercises and real-world applications.
4. **Motivation and Engagement:** CRT emphasizes the importance of motivation in the therapeutic process. Therapists work to engage clients actively in their treatment, fostering a sense of ownership over their cognitive improvement.

## **Benefits of CRT Therapy**

The benefits of CRT therapy extend beyond cognitive enhancement; they encompass a wide range of improvements in overall mental health and quality of life. Some key benefits include:

- **Improved Cognitive Functions:** CRT specifically targets cognitive deficits, leading to measurable improvements in areas such as attention, memory, and executive functioning.
- **Enhanced Daily Functioning:** By improving cognitive skills, individuals often experience better performance in daily tasks, work, and social interactions.
- **Increased Self-Esteem:** As individuals notice improvements in their cognitive abilities and daily functioning, their self-esteem and confidence often rise.
- **Reduction in Symptoms:** For some individuals, cognitive remediation can lead to a reduction in psychiatric symptoms, contributing to overall mental health improvement.

- Better Treatment Outcomes: CRT can enhance the effectiveness of other forms of therapy, making it a valuable addition to comprehensive mental health treatment plans.

## **Applications of CRT Therapy**

CRT therapy has been applied in various settings and for different populations, demonstrating its versatility and effectiveness. Some notable applications include:

### **1. Schizophrenia**

CRT was initially developed for individuals with schizophrenia, targeting cognitive deficits that often accompany this disorder. Research has shown that CRT can lead to significant improvements in cognitive functioning and can enhance the overall treatment outcomes for individuals with schizophrenia.

### **2. Depression and Anxiety Disorders**

Individuals with depression and anxiety often experience cognitive impairments, such as difficulties with concentration and memory. CRT can help these individuals improve their cognitive skills, which can alleviate some of the cognitive symptoms associated with these disorders.

### **3. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**

For individuals recovering from TBI, CRT can be an essential part of rehabilitation. It helps address cognitive deficits that may hinder recovery and improve overall functioning and quality of life.

### **4. Neurodevelopmental Disorders**

CRT has also been employed in the treatment of neurodevelopmental disorders, such as ADHD and autism spectrum disorders. By enhancing cognitive skills, CRT can support individuals in managing their symptoms more effectively.

## **Implementation of CRT Therapy**

The successful implementation of CRT therapy requires careful planning and execution. Here are some key considerations:

# **1. Qualified Professionals**

CRT should be administered by trained professionals, such as psychologists, occupational therapists, or speech-language pathologists, who have experience with cognitive rehabilitation.

# **2. Individualized Treatment Plans**

Each individual's treatment plan should be tailored to their specific cognitive deficits and mental health challenges. Regular assessments should be conducted to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments to the therapy.

# **3. Integration with Other Treatments**

For optimal results, CRT should be integrated with other therapeutic approaches, such as medication management and psychotherapy. This holistic approach can enhance treatment outcomes and improve the overall mental health of the individual.

# **4. Family Involvement**

Involving family members in the therapy process can provide additional support for the individual. Family members can learn about cognitive deficits and how to support their loved ones in applying newly acquired skills in daily life.

## **Challenges and Limitations of CRT Therapy**

While CRT therapy offers numerous benefits, it is not without challenges and limitations:

- **Accessibility:** Access to qualified professionals trained in CRT can be limited, particularly in rural or underserved areas.
- **Individual Variability:** The effectiveness of CRT can vary significantly among individuals. Some may experience substantial improvements, while others may find it less beneficial.
- **Time Commitment:** CRT typically requires a significant time commitment from individuals, which may pose challenges for those with busy schedules or other responsibilities.
- **Need for Continued Research:** Although evidence supporting CRT is growing, further research is needed to fully understand its long-term effects and optimal implementation strategies.

# Future Directions in CRT Therapy

As mental health professionals continue to explore innovative treatment options, several future directions for CRT therapy are emerging:

- **Technological Integration:** The use of technology, such as virtual reality and computer-based cognitive training programs, can enhance the delivery and accessibility of CRT.
- **Broader Applications:** Expanding CRT to address cognitive deficits in a wider range of mental health disorders can contribute to more comprehensive treatment options.
- **Personalized Approaches:** Advancements in neuropsychological assessments and individualized treatment plans can lead to more effective and tailored CRT interventions.
- **Greater Awareness and Training:** Increasing awareness of CRT among mental health professionals and providing training programs can enhance the quality and availability of this therapeutic approach.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, CRT therapy represents a promising avenue for addressing cognitive deficits associated with various mental health disorders. By focusing on enhancing cognitive functions, CRT not only improves individual capabilities but also contributes to overall mental well-being. As research continues and the field evolves, CRT therapy is likely to play an increasingly vital role in comprehensive mental health treatment strategies. Emphasizing personalized and integrated approaches will ensure that CRT remains a relevant and effective intervention for those seeking to improve their cognitive functioning and mental health.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is CRT therapy in the context of mental health?

CRT therapy, or Cognitive Remediation Therapy, is a therapeutic approach designed to improve cognitive functioning in individuals with mental health disorders, particularly those with schizophrenia or cognitive impairments.

### How does CRT therapy benefit individuals with mental health disorders?

CRT therapy helps enhance cognitive skills such as attention, memory, and problem-solving, which can lead to improved daily functioning and better overall quality of life for individuals with mental health disorders.

## **Is CRT therapy effective for all mental health conditions?**

While CRT therapy has shown effectiveness primarily for schizophrenia and related disorders, its benefits are being explored for other conditions, such as depression and bipolar disorder, though more research is needed.

## **What techniques are commonly used in CRT therapy?**

Techniques used in CRT therapy may include computer-based exercises, memory tasks, problem-solving activities, and social cognition training to enhance cognitive abilities.

## **How long does a typical CRT therapy program last?**

A typical CRT therapy program can vary in duration but often consists of several weeks to a few months of sessions, with regular practice and reinforcement of skills.

## **Can CRT therapy be combined with other forms of treatment?**

Yes, CRT therapy is often used in conjunction with medication, psychotherapy, and other rehabilitation programs to provide a comprehensive approach to mental health treatment.

## **What is the role of a therapist in CRT therapy?**

A therapist in CRT therapy guides patients through cognitive exercises, provides feedback, and helps to develop personalized strategies to improve cognitive functioning and address specific challenges.

## **Are there any side effects associated with CRT therapy?**

CRT therapy is generally considered safe, with minimal side effects; however, patients may experience frustration or fatigue during sessions as they engage in challenging cognitive tasks.

## **How can someone access CRT therapy?**

Individuals interested in CRT therapy should consult with a mental health professional or therapist who specializes in cognitive remediation, who can provide referrals or recommend appropriate programs.

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Discover how CRT therapy can transform mental health by enhancing emotional resilience and well-being. Learn more about its benefits and applications today!

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