

## Online behavioral therapy is still in infancy

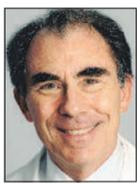
**Q:** I've been looking into cognitive behavioral therapy to help with my anxiety. It would be convenient to do this therapy from home and, surprisingly, there seem to be many online CBT options. But would the therapy be less effective if I didn't have a personal connection with an actual therapist?

**A:** Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) attempts to correct ingrained patterns of negative thoughts and behaviors. It's an effective treatment for depression, anxiety and other behavioral health problems. It also is widely used to help people with chronic diseases cope with that burden. Face-to-face visits with a therapist can be inconvenient and may be expensive (depending on your insurance). And there are online CBT options. But the question is: Are they effective?

I spoke to my colleague Dr. James Carreine, a licensed clinical psychologist and a

researcher at Harvard-affiliated Brigham and Women's Hospital. He pointed out that because these online programs are relatively new, there are only a few evaluations of how effective they are. He noted that a team of researchers recently reviewed five well-designed studies comparing online CBT to face-to-face visits with clinicians providing CBT. The patients were all working-age adults being treated for social anxiety or panic disorder.

All of the online therapies delivered treatment through written content. Some programs added text-messaging and discussion forums. Most also involved some communication with a mental health clinician, usually a psychologist, over email or private



Ask Doctor K

messaging systems. This could be quite limited, however. In one study, psychologists were limited to spending only 10 minutes per week on each patient. Finally, most included homework assignments that participants did between sessions.

All treatment groups, both face-to-face and online CBT, had significantly improved symptoms. One study found better outcomes for the online treatment. The others found equal results between the two types.

While these results are encouraging for people who are interested in online CBT, I'd emphasize that they are not conclusive.

First of all, five small studies do not provide a lot of evidence. Furthermore, researchers tend to submit studies with a positive result for publication. They don't always seek to publish, and journal editors often don't want to publish, studies

showing that treatment was ineffective.

More important, CBT is not one thing. What I mean is that a pill is a pill, whichever doctor has prescribed it. But CBT is a treatment that is practiced differently by different therapists, and those therapists are not all equally skilled. So it's hard to know from published studies whether the particular online CBT program that you are interested in will be effective.

I'm not knocking online CBT; I'm just saying that it is in its infancy. I hope that most online CBT programs prove to be effective. They not only are more convenient for the people that use them; they also require less time on the part of the therapists. That would allow therapists to offer treatment to more people.

• Dr. Komaroff is a physician and professor at Harvard Medical School. To send questions, go to AskDoctorK.com.

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**This week's workout: Walk 4 min/  
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**Couch to 5K Week 2 tip:  
Wearing the right clothes**

BY NICK HURLEY

Dick Pond

Many runners wear the wrong clothing or too many layers making it tougher for their bodies to handle the heat or cold. Consider the following:

Runners should wear technical fabrics which are designed to wick sweat away from your body, keeping you dry and comfortable. This helps you manage your body temperature and avoid chafing or blistering.

Avoid wearing cotton. Cotton is a fiber that absorbs moisture and once it's wet, it will stay wet. Quality running apparel is made of synthetic fibers that wick moisture, in turn moving it away from your body and helping that moisture evaporate.

Running apparel that contains these fibers (nylon, polyester, wool) will perform better and last longer.

Your sock is an integral piece of apparel, too. A good choice here will help considerably with preventing blisters and overall foot comfort. Just like the rest of your wardrobe, you should avoid cotton at all costs. Dick Pond staff favorites include Balega, Feetures, Swiftwick and Smartwool.



**Not sure how to dress for running? Look at the current temperature is to add 15 degrees to it and then dress accordingly.**

Socks with these moisture management properties will both improve the quality of your run and last longer.

Be careful not to over-dress. Once you warm up, you may realize that you have too many layers or long sleeves that need and begin to over-heat. A good rule of thumb when looking at the current temperature is to add 15 degrees to it and then dress accordingly.

## Five things you need to know about depressing ovarian cancer report

BY LAURIE MCGINLEY

Washington Post

Of all the "women's cancers," ovarian is among the most diabolical.

A new, congressionally mandated report by the Institute of Medicine spells out, sometimes in unnerving detail, the challenges confronting researchers in understanding the disease and patients in getting good care. About 21,000 women will be diagnosed with the illness this year, and 14,000 women will die from it.

Partly because it sneaks up on women without announcing itself, the disease has a five-year survival rate of just under 46 percent, compared to nearly 90 percent for breast cancer, more than 80 percent for endometrial cancer and nearly 70 percent for cervical

cancer. Still, that's some progress. In the 1970s, only 36 percent of women survived at least five years.

And there are ways for patients to improve their odds. Here are five take-aways from the report:

1) The term "ovarian cancer" is a misnomer, because the disease, in fact, is a "constellation of distinct types of cancer" involving the ovary — all with different tumor types, distinctive molecular signatures and prognoses, the report says. Many of these cancers, scientists now know, don't start in the ovary at all, but arise from other areas, such as the fallopian tubes, and eventually spread to the ovary. Unfortunately, researchers don't yet understand even the basics on how the different subtypes develop and progress.

2) Ovarian cancer is called a "silent killer" because it often doesn't cause major symptoms, which is why so many women are diagnosed at advanced stages, reducing their chances of survival. But recent research shows that most patients did have some symptoms before being diagnosed, including abdominal pain and bloating. Even minor changes should be checked out.

3) There are disturbing and significant racial disparities in the five-year survival rate. While the overall survival rate is 46 percent, only a little more than one-third of black women survive that long.

4) Angelina Jolie may have made the BRCA1 gene — implicated in breast and ovarian cancers — a household word, but many more women, and their close relatives,

should be undergoing genetic testing and counseling. The report recommends that all women diagnosed with ovarian cancer have genetic testing to help map treatment decisions.

5) Less than half of women with ovarian cancer are getting the standard of care as outlined in national practice guidelines designed to improve survival and reduce surgical complications, the report said. Two of the most important predictors of good care: Women are being treated by gynecologic oncologists, and they are receiving treatment at a high-volume hospital or cancer center. Urgently needed are early detection methods that go beyond current imaging techniques, which aren't reliable in finding small, early-stage lesions.

## Business Insight

Dr. Aimee & Associates

### Dr. Aimee and Associates Empowers People and Changes Lives



Ask any participant about the effects of making it through the Daily Herald's Fittest Loser Challenge and you'll likely hear the words "life-changing." If you're not a contestant, however, how do you

forge a path to health and wellness?

You could consider joining a Peak Wellness Program, an educational and curriculum-based lifestyle program at Dr. Aimee and Associates. The programs are individually designed to help people reclaim health and vitality.

"We're essentially creating a true road map to health and wellness that really works," explained Dr. Aimee Harris-Newton, an integrative clinical and health psychologist.

The certified hypnotherapist, coach and Reiki master and her team are celebrating a fourth year this May at their integrative health and wellness center in Bloomingdale. In April, they will open a new wellness center in Hinsdale and in the summer, the Bloomingdale location will expand to include a yoga studio, a kitchen for healthy cooking classes and a whole range of additional services to empower people and change lives.

"Our services are very different from what most people have come to expect as the standard of care with today's mainstream healthcare," Harris-Newton said. "We take a 'whole person' approach to health and wellness, with a special emphasis on understanding the root cause of our clients' and patients' concerns. We honor and respect our clients and treat the body, mind and spirit."

The center offers traditional and holistic health and wellness services — both Eastern and Western health approaches — that include but are not limited to integrative family medicine; psychology and counseling; psychiatry for children, adolescents and adults; health and success coaching, hypnotherapy; integrative chiropractic and functional medicine (Lifestyle

Medicine); traditional Chinese medicine; acupuncture; massage; Reiki; and cranial-sacral therapy.

Harris-Newton, who has been practicing for over 20 years, cautions against hopping onto trends, but to stick to what's tried and true regarding health and wellness.

"The 'secret' to health and wellness isn't a secret at all — it's about balance — healthy foods that are healthy for YOUR body, exercise that is suited for your body, stress management, and something that adds joy and stirs your soul," she said.

Dr. Aimee and Associates chose to partner with the Daily Herald's Fittest Loser Challenge to show support to everyone who is taking control of his or her health.

"With today's foods, high-stress lifestyles and constant demands, if we're not actively working toward creating and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, it's simply a matter of when, not if, we or a loved one (will) become ill or diagnosed with a disease that most always is preventable by making healthy lifestyle choices," she said. "To everyone involved in the Fittest Loser Challenge, Dr. Aimee and Associates applauds you!"

Harris-Newton says everyone in her office are role models for living a healthy lifestyle, and she is coaching a team participating in the Fittest Loser At Work challenge. "I, too, am 'walking the walk' along with the rest of our team," she said. Additionally, her office is offering special deals to others participating in the At Work challenge.



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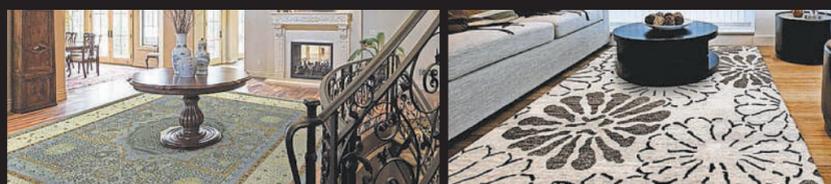
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