

# The added value of couple-based interventions compared to individual treatment for patients with personality disorder and their partners

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Studies examining the effect of couple therapy or couple-based interventions in treatment for personality disorder are very scarce and more research is required. Therefore, the present study examines the effect of couple-based interventions in...

<b>Ethical review</b>	Approved WMO
<b>Status</b>	Completed
<b>Health condition type</b>	Personality disorders and disturbances in behaviour
<b>Study type</b>	Interventional

## Summary

### ID

NL-OMON43682

### Source

ToetsingOnline

### Brief title

couple-based interventions for personality disorders

### Condition

- Personality disorders and disturbances in behaviour

### Synonym

emotion regulation disorders, personality disorders

### Research involving

Human

### Sponsors and support

**Primary sponsor:** Parnassia Bavo Groep (Den Haag)

**Source(s) of monetary or material Support:** Er is nauwelijks financiering nodig. Manuren van onderzoeker zijn in kader van opleiding tot klinisch psycholoog. De beperkte kosten zoals printkosten en verzendkosten worden vergoed door de Parnassia Bavogroep

## **Intervention**

**Keyword:** Couple therapy, Couple-based interventions, Personality Disorders, Treatment

## **Outcome measures**

### **Primary outcome**

Measurements for patients:

a.Awareness and clarity of emotions (two basic components of emotion regulation) are measured with The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS; Gratz & Roemer, 2004)

b.Relationship satisfaction is measured with Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick et al., 1998)

c.General mental distress is measured with Korte Klachten Lijst (KKL; Appelo & Lange, 2007)

### **Secondary outcome**

Measurements for partner of patient:

a.Awareness and clarity of emotions (two basic components of emotion regulation) are measured with The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale

(DERS; Gratz & Roemer, 2004)

b. Relationship satisfaction is measured with Relationship Assessment Scale

(RAS; Hendrick et al., 1998)

c. General mental distress is measured with Korte Klachten Lijst (KKL; Appelo & Lange, 2007)

## Study description

### Background summary

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the knowledge of couple-based interventions for patients with personality disorder. Personality disordered individuals have great difficulties in emotion regulation and experience major and repetitive problems in relationships, work and social functioning. For many people, the relationship they have with their partner will be the most important interpersonal relationship they develop in their lifetime. Recent studies show that a personality disordered partner can have a severe impact on the relationship and that partners can play a role in maintaining dysfunctional personality patterns. Therefore it seems logical to assume that the treatment approaches for personality disorder could benefit from involving the partner.

Couple-based interventions are considered a useful complement in treatment for personality disorder. They can help in gaining knowledge and insight into how patients and partners' personality patterns contribute to emotion dysregulation and relationship dysfunction. Couples can develop a sense of empathy, sensitivity, and responsiveness toward one another in order to reduce, or simply better manage, the unhelpful and rigid personality features that increase interpersonal discord. The rationale for treating individual distress or psychopathology with couple and family treatment stems from a substantial amount of research in which relationship factors have been shown relevant to individual psychopathology, and vice versa, in a number of different ways. Yet,

little is known about the effectiveness of couple-based interventions for couples in which one partner suffers from personality disorder.

## **Study objective**

Studies examining the effect of couple therapy or couple-based interventions in treatment for personality disorder are very scarce and more research is required. Therefore, the present study examines the effect of couple-based interventions in treatment for all kinds of personality disorders on relationship satisfaction, emotion regulation and global mental distress. This study examines the effect of couple therapy, in a multiple baseline design where couple therapy combined with individual treatment is compared to individual treatment as usual for patients with personality disorders. We focus on two basic components of emotion regulation, that is awareness and clarity of emotions (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). Furthermore we examine the effect on relationship satisfaction and general mental distress.

## **Study design**

The study is a non concurrent multiple baseline design. The non concurrent multiple baseline design allows participants to be evaluated at different point in time. The non concurrent MB design is essentially a series of A-B replications in which the length of each baseline phase differs (Carr, 2005) The A-phase (baseline) is treatment as usual (individual treatment) and the B-phase is treatment as usual (individual treatment) combined with couple-based interventions. Three different baselines are used as recommended by Christ (2009). For this study we use the following baselines: 4 sessions, 5 sessions or 6 sessions of TAU.

Per participant, patients and their partners, 17 measurements are performed. One measurement prior to treatment and 16 weekly measurements during treatment period.

## **Intervention**

All participants receive the same treatment, that is treatment as usual and experimental treatment. The general focus of treatment is increasing global and interpersonal functioning, increasing emotion regulation and decreasing psychological complaints.

This study can best be described as an A-B-A design.

In phase A patients receive treatment as usual, that is individual treatment for Personality Disorder. The amount of TAU is 4, 5 or 6 sessions, depending on the baseline condition. The sessions takes 45 minutes, with a frequency of one session a week.

In phase B patients receive 6 sessions of TAU and 6 sessions (containing couple-based interventions) with their partner. The sessions of TAU and the sessions with partner take 45 minutes per sessions, with a frequency of one session a week.

After phase B, phase A follows again. This phase serves as a follow up period. It also eliminates any occurring differences between baseline conditions so that all patients receive the same amount of sessions.

A protocol is written for the sessions with partner (containing couple-based interventions), using the principles of the pluralistic model of Snyder and Whisman (2003) (Snyder & Balderrama-During, 2012). This protocol provides guidelines to determine which theoretical approach and intervention is needed in which specific stage (see attachment 2).

Total duration of treatment is 16 weeks. When necessary, individual treatment and treatment with partner can be continued after research period of 16 weeks.

## **Study burden and risks**

Per participant, patients and their partners, 17 measurements are performed. One measurement prior to treatment and 16 weekly measurements during treatment period. Completing the questionnaire takes about 5-10 minutes. The questionnaire can be conducted digital or by telephone. In clinical practice couple or family therapy is not frequently used in the treatment of personality disorders, and if it is added, it is later during the treatment. With this study we would like to increase the use of this kind of therapy. All participants receive the same sort and amount of treatment. We believe that risks for patients who participate in the present study are low. Given the duration of the study (16 weeks) and the number of therapy sessions that partner is involved (6 sessions), we think that this period of time is a viable investment for the patient and their partner. We consider the burden for patients and their partners therefore limited. In this consideration, we have also taken into account that an average treatment for personality disorder takes about 1-3 years.

## **Contacts**

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## **Trial sites**

### **Listed location countries**

Netherlands

## **Eligibility criteria**

### **Age**

Adults (18-64 years)

Elderly (65 years and older)

### **Inclusion criteria**

Inclusion criteria for subjects (patients) are;

- age 18-65
- presence of a personality disorder (according to the DSM-V)
- presence of a partner, duration of relationship is at least 1 year
- partner and patient are willing to commit to couple-based interventions

### **Exclusion criteria**

Exclusion criteria for subjects (patient and/or partner) are:

- Diagnosis of a psychotic disorder, bipolar disorder or a major depressive episode, intellectual disability, severe substance dependence, high vulnerability to crisis, severe domestic violence (according to the DSM-IV)

## **Study design**

## Design

Study type:	Interventional
Intervention model:	Parallel
Allocation:	Randomized controlled trial
Masking:	Open (masking not used)
Control:	Active
Primary purpose:	Treatment

## Recruitment

NL	
Recruitment status:	Completed
Start date (anticipated):	30-11-2016
Enrollment:	12
Type:	Actual

## Ethics review

Approved WMO	
Date:	20-12-2016
Application type:	First submission
Review commission:	METC Leiden-Den Haag-Delft (Leiden)
	<a href="mailto:metc-ldd@lumc.nl">metc-ldd@lumc.nl</a>

## Study registrations

### Followed up by the following (possibly more current) registration

No registrations found.

### Other (possibly less up-to-date) registrations in this register

No registrations found.

**In other registers**

Register	ID
CCMO	NL55559.058.16