

The Perth Voices Clinic

is a psychological treatment, teaching and research clinic for people who hear voices or have other unusual perceptual experiences.



Assessing clinically significant change in voice distress.

What do we already know about this topic?

Voice hearing is relatively common in the general community and in various clinical groups. Whilst generally considered a symptom of psychotic disorders, they are also associated with neurodegenerative and neurological disorders or can occur in people with no disorder at all. Rather than eliminating this phenomenon, many people seeking treatment for auditory hallucination are simply looking to reduce their levels of distress attached to them. This has been found to improve their overall sense of wellbeing. Driven by this fact, treatments and services have focused on helping to reduce the amount of distress felt when experiencing hallucinations. Assessing whether these treatments work has therefore become an important issue for therapists and clients, alike. But the question is: *what is the best way to make this assessment?* One way is to use a method called “clinical significance” assessment to make the evaluation.

What did we do?

In their 2019 study, Johanna Badcock (Perth Voices Clinic), Madeleine E. Graham (Murdoch University) and Georgie Paulik (Perth Voices Clinic) used the clinical significance method to develop a tool to help clinicians and clients know whether changes in voice distress following treatment are reliable (not due to chance) and clinically significant (meaningful). The team used a statistical method developed by Jacobson and Truax (1991) and assessed voice distress with a widely used measure of hallucinations, the Psychotic Symptom Rating Scale-Auditory Hallucinations.

Did it work?

The study showed that the new tool provided a valid way of assessing whether clients have benefited from therapy, or not. The method can help classify treatment outcomes into four groups: recovered, improved, deteriorated, or no change. Knowing this information can help guide discussions between clients and therapists about future treatment decisions. The tool is freely available for use via the Open Science Framework ([https:// osf.io/gd9e5/](https://osf.io/gd9e5/)).

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Original Report: Badcock, J.C., Graham, M., Paulik, G. (2020). Assessing the clinical significance of treatment outcomes for distressing voices in routine clinical practice. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 27, 79-86

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