

Therapeutic alliance and Internet interventions. How much are we needed?

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Background

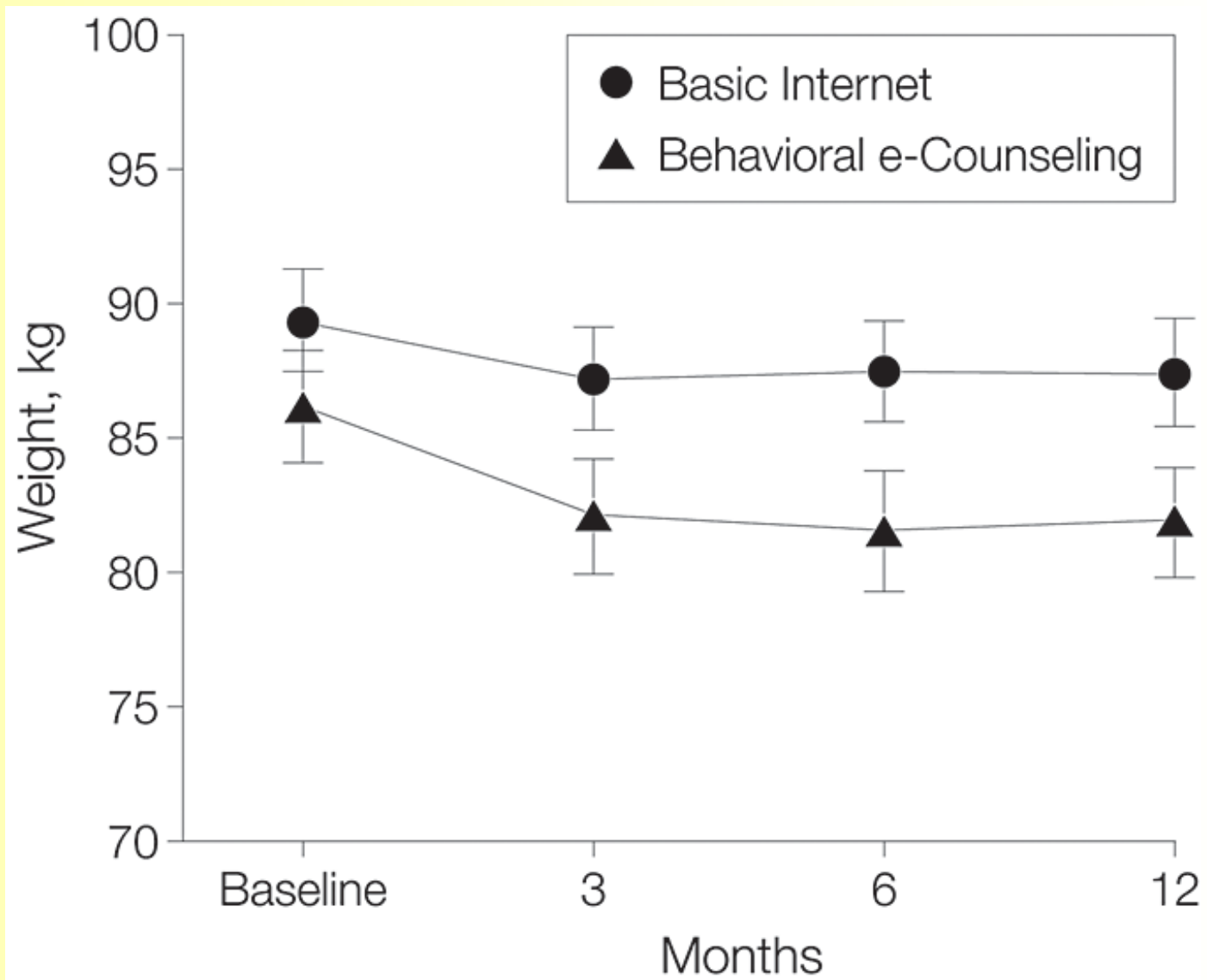
- In CBT the therapist has an active role
- Working alliance is a robust factor (albeit with a small correlation with outcome)
- What do we know about therapist factors in Internet-delivered treatments?

Plausible conclusion!

- It is crucial to have some (at least perceived) therapist contact for Internet-delivered to work most effectively
- Some participants might do without a coach (therapist), but this markedly reduces adherence and possibly effectiveness

Emerging evidence

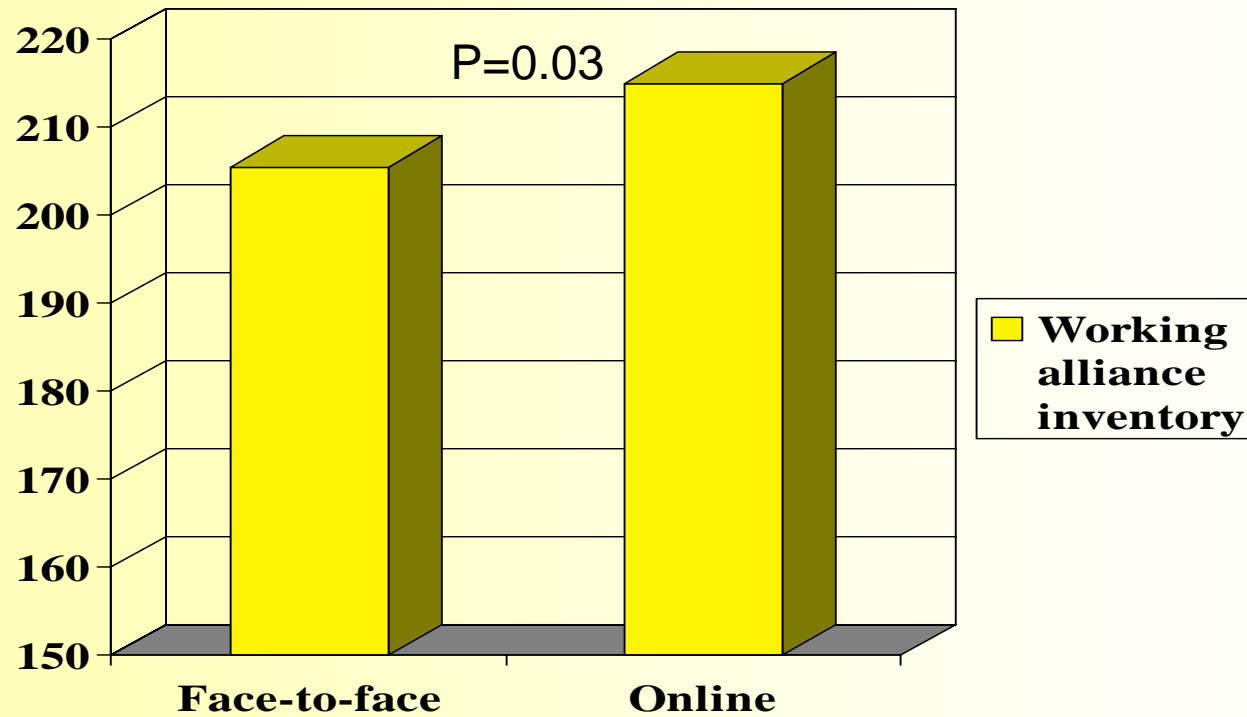
- Fewer drop-outs with more contact
- Pure self-help Internet programs for depression are less effective (e.g., Clarke et al. 2002)
- Automated systems is an alternative, and perhaps more interactive computer programs are less affected by decreased therapist input?



Tate et al. 2003 JAMA

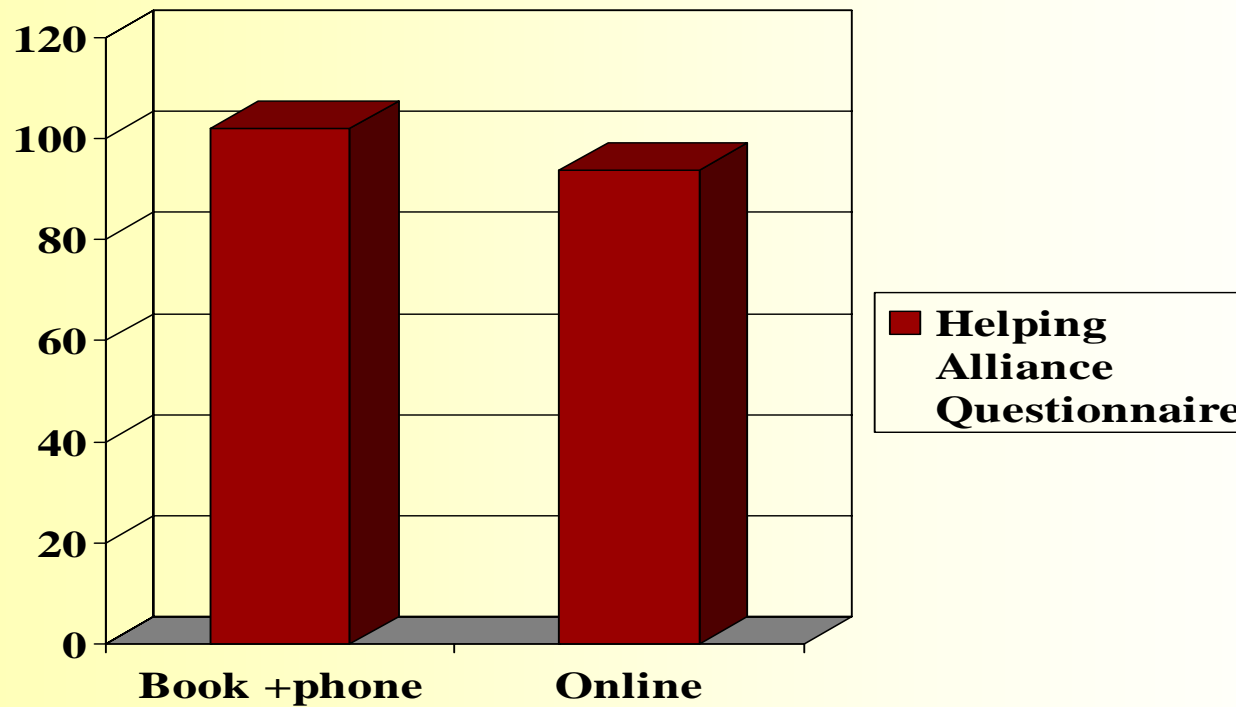


Therapeutic alliance?



Cook & Doyle, 2002, Cyberpsychology and Behavior

Klein et al. (in press)



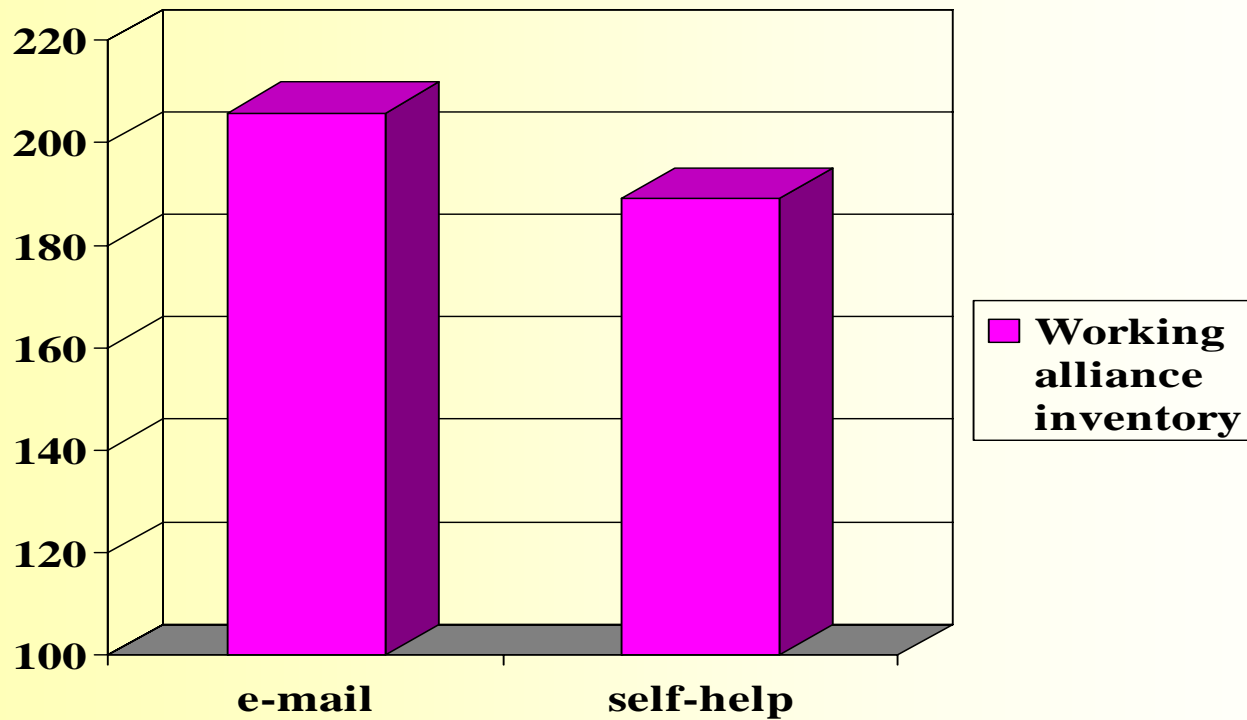
Helping alliance questionnaire

Depression study you just heard about

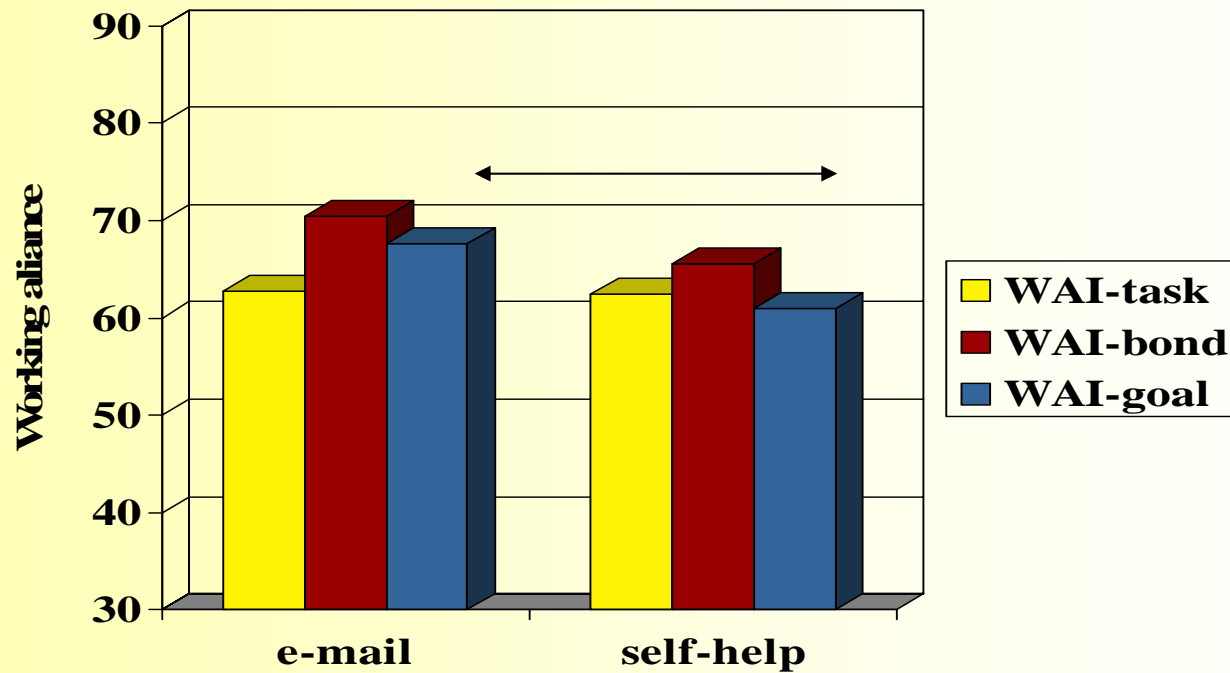
- 90 participants randomized to 3 conditions
- e-mail therapy, minimal contact self-help and waiting list
- Treatment for 10 weeks

Working alliance and Internet-delivered CBT for depression

- The Klara research group
- Working Alliance Inventory (Horvath & Greenberg, 1986) adapted for Internet use (alpha = .94)
- Five failed to respond in each group (lower change scores among those who responded)
- Administered between session 3 to 4



No difference!



Lower WAI-goal scores in the self-help group

Associations with outcome

- No significant associations between alliance ratings and change scores on the outcome measures (e.g., BDI $r = .07$)
- This is in line with the overall low correlation between alliance and outcome (Martin et al. 2000; $r = .22$)

Was this expected?

- Not really
- Some had difficulties using the questionnaire
- Overall high scores
- The difference obtained makes sense
- There was variability in scores

Final words

- Therapist factors are important in Internet-delivered treatments, but perhaps not alliance (the way we measure it)
- Specific instruments for Internet therapy should be developed

