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Why many clinical psychologists are resistant to evidence-based practice: Root causes and constructive remedies

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Highlights

- Evidence-based practice does not equal empirically supported therapy.
- Evidence concerning clinicians' attitudes toward evidence-based practice is reviewed.
- Sources of professionals' resistance to evidence-based practice are examined.
- Misconceptions regarding evidence-based practice are delineated.
- Recommendations for addressing resistance to evidence-based practice

are outlined.

Abstract

Psychotherapists are taught that when a client expresses resistance repeatedly, they must understand and address its underlying sources. Yet proponents of evidence-based practice (EBP) have routinely ignored the root causes of many clinical psychologists' reservations concerning the use of scientific evidence to inform clinical practice. As a consequence, much of the resistance to EBP persists, potentially widening the already large scientistâ€“practitioner gap. Following a review of survey data on psychologists' attitudes toward EBP, we examine six sources underpinning resistance toward EBP in clinical psychology and allied domains: (a) naïve realism, which can lead clinicians to conclude erroneously that client change is due to an intervention itself rather than to a host of competing explanations; (b) deep-seated misconceptions regarding human nature (e.g., mistaken beliefs regarding the causal primacy of early experiences) that can hinder the adoption of evidence-based treatments; (c) statistical misunderstandings regarding the application of group probabilities to individuals; (d) erroneous apportioning of the burden of proof on skeptics rather than proponents of untested therapies; (e) widespread mischaracterizations of what EBP entails; and (f) pragmatic, educational, and attitudinal obstacles, such as the discomfort of many practitioners with evaluating the increasingly technical psychotherapy outcome literature. We advance educational proposals for articulating the importance of EBP to the forthcoming generation of clinical practitioners and researchers, and constructive remedies for addressing clinical psychologists' objections to EBP.



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Keywords

Evidence-based practice; Psychotherapy; Naive realism; Scienceâ€“practice gap

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