

Evaluating a novel cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) intervention for sexuality changes after traumatic brain injury

Elinor Fraser^{1,2}, Marina Downing^{1,2}, Kerrie Haines¹, Linda Bennett¹, John Olver³, Jennie Ponsford^{1,2}

¹ Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health, School of Psychological Sciences, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia

² Monash-Epworth Rehabilitation Research Centre, Epworth Healthcare, Richmond, Victoria, Australia

³ Rehabilitation Medicine, Epworth HealthCare, Richmond, Victoria, Australia

Introduction

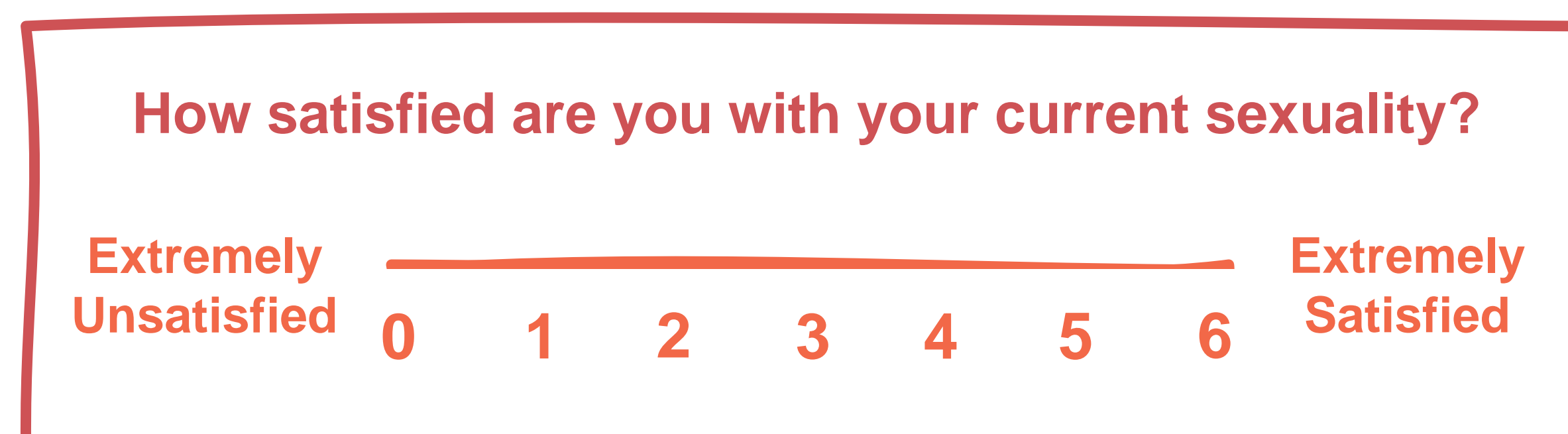
- More than half of adults with traumatic brain injury (TBI) report sexual dysfunction and/or poor sexual wellbeing post-injury.
- Despite widespread acknowledgement that sexuality changes persist long term, no evidence-based interventions exist to promote positive sexual adjustment following TBI.

Aim

- Examine the efficacy of CBT-SWELL, a novel, individualised Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) treatment for Sexual WELL-being, after TBI using a single case series design.

Method

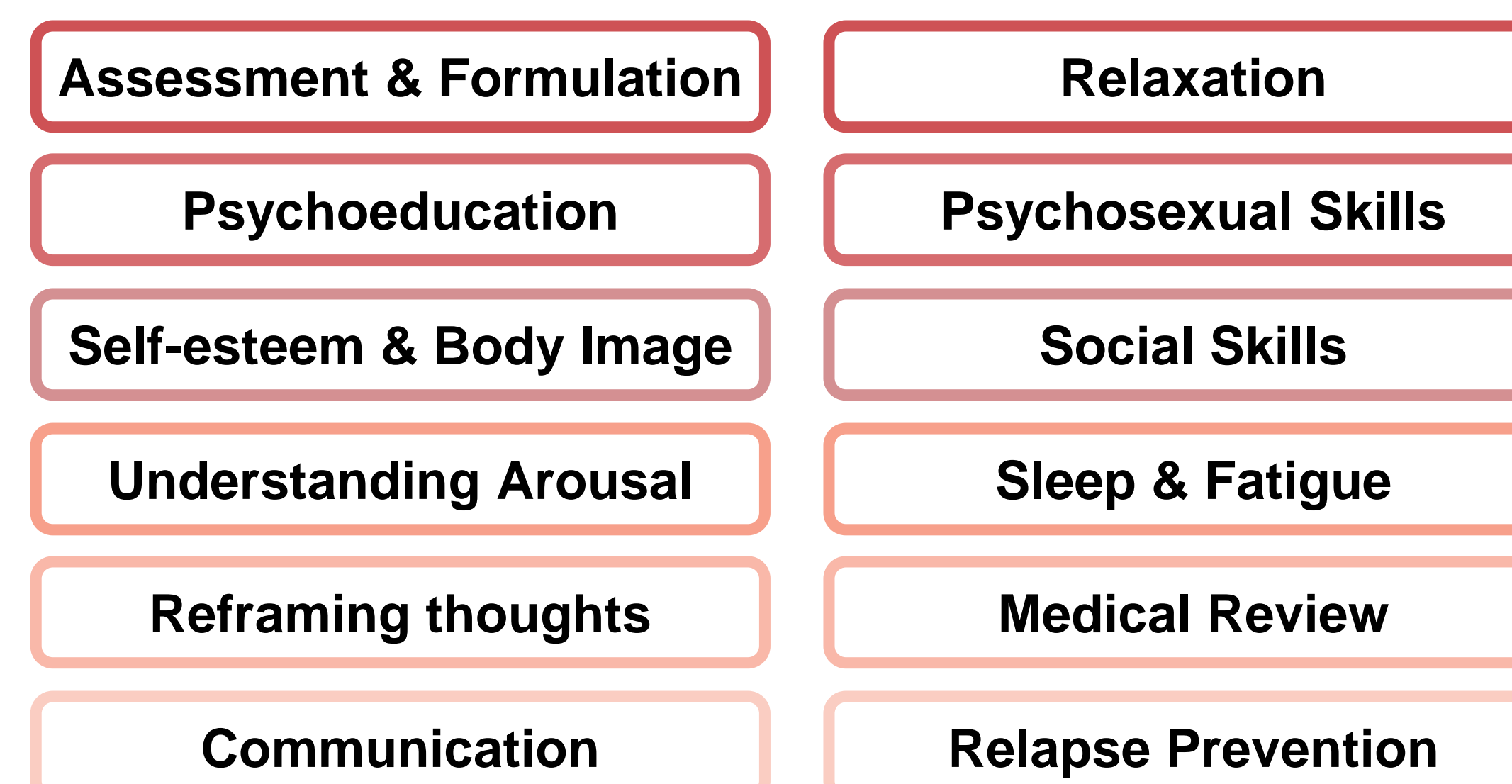
- A multiple baselines, AB single-case experimental design (SCED) with 2-mth follow-up in nine adults (5 female) with moderate-severe TBI and a mean time post-injury of 6.56-years.
- Primary outcome measure completed 3 x week:



- Secondary outcome measures of mood, self-esteem, social participation and functional goal attainment completed at 3 timepoints (pre-treatment, post-treatment, 2-mth follow-up).

The Intervention

- Offered to both individuals and couples, treatment consisted of 8 sessions + 1 booster session with a clinical psychologist and an optional medical review.
- Sessions were audio-recorded and rated by an independent psychologist.
- Treatment guide consisted of 12 modules that were flexibly selected and delivered according to the individuals/couples needs.



Results

- Primary outcome measure analysed using visual and statistical, i.e., Tau-U, analysis.
- 5 participants demonstrated improved sexuality satisfaction post-treatment. An additional 3 participants showed delayed treatment response, with improved sexuality satisfaction reported at follow up.
- All participants demonstrated clinically significant improvement in at least one goal.
- Adequate treatment adherence and good feasibility shown.

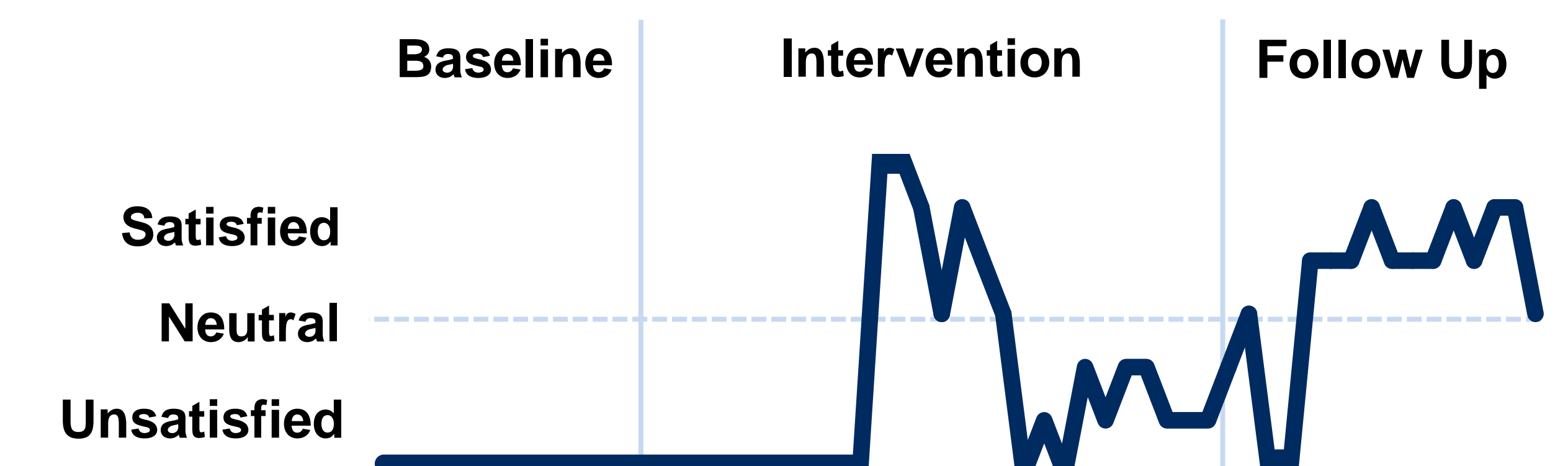
Case Study - Emma*

At 10-months post-injury, Emma was struggling with feeling “disconnected” from her body. She endorsed behavioural changes (irritability, anger outbursts) as well as fatigue that were contributing to loss of intimacy in her marriage.

Emma’s Treatment Modules



Emma’s Sexuality Satisfaction



“It saved us... It brought us together, just even her sessions, we were able to communicate effectively and go, ‘Yeah, this is where we’re at’”

Conclusions

- The results provide preliminary evidence of efficacy for CBT-SWELL in treating complex and diverse sexuality problems after TBI, with larger trials warranted.