

## **Culturally Adapted Cognitive Behavioural Therapy For Canadians of South Asian Origin: A Research Study<sup>1</sup>**

### **What was the aim of the study?**

As the first study of its kind in North America, this project set out to develop and test a new, specialized form of psychotherapy for South Asians in Canada who are affected by anxiety and depression. Its goals were to offer culturally adapted cognitive behavioural therapy (CaCBT), evaluate whether participants found the treatment feasible and acceptable, and create a [training package](#) to enable providers to offer it to this community.

### **Why was this research necessary?**

- This population requires better psychological services (tailored to their cultural needs) to support their mental health and address stigma.
- South Asians make up the largest racialized group in Canada (about 2.6 million individuals, or seven per cent of the population).
- The community is affected by higher rates of anxiety and mood disorders than other populations in Canada.
- Depression is more prevalent among Canadian women of South Asian origin than other women in Canada.
- South Asians in Canada are up to 85 per cent less likely to access mental health services.

### **What is CBT?**

CBT is an evidence-based psychological treatment proven to help people with mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression. Developed in a Western context, it focuses on changing people's negative thoughts and beliefs, which can improve unhelpful attitudes and behaviours.

### **Why culturally adapt CBT?**

- When culturally adapted, CBT can improve mental health outcomes for South Asians and other immigrant, refugee, ethnocultural, and racialized populations in Canada.
- Adapting CBT will give South Asian populations greater access to effective, culturally appropriate mental health therapy.

### **How was CBT culturally adapted?**

- The research team consulted with South Asians across Canada who have lived and living experience, caregivers, community leaders, and mental health professionals for their input.

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<sup>1</sup> For this project, the term *Canadians* refers to individuals residing in Canada, including those without citizenship status.

- It used these valuable findings to adapt standardized CBT and develop guidelines for culturally adapted CBT for the South Asian community.
- Therapists at partner agencies in Vancouver, Greater Toronto Area, and Ottawa were trained to use the new guidelines and test their acceptability and effectiveness with South Asian populations who are impacted by anxiety and depression.

### Which agencies were involved?

With funding from Health Canada, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the Mental Health Commission of Canada worked with respected community agencies from across Canada that were essential to the project's implementation. These include:

- [Moving Forward Family Services](#) (Vancouver)
- [Punjabi Community Health Services](#) (Greater Toronto Area)
- [Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre](#), hosted by Somerset West Community Health Centre (Ottawa)



### What training resources are available for providers who would like to offer CaCBT to South Asians in Canada?

The research project's training assumes that providers have had previous training and experience in CBT.

What the CaCBT for South Asians [training package](#) includes:

- A **research study report** outlining its background, methodology, findings, and recommendations
- A **one-pager for mental health professionals** providing details about CaCBT, along with feedback from service users and mental health professionals
- A **two-pager for service users** with CaCBT information to help them understand what to expect from the therapy
- A **CaCBT manual** that gives mental health professionals hands-on techniques for implementing the therapy
- **Training videos** to supplement the manual and enrich trainees' experience while learning about culturally adapted CBT