

Development of a Digital Learning Platform for Psychotherapists

Combining Science, Expertise, and Technology

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This symposium describes the development and use of an online learning platform that encompasses the main components of psychotherapeutics, including essential knowledge domains, principles, skills acquisition, and measurement of competence. The platform is curated by experts and is designed to serve the needs of learners at all levels, from graduate school to pre-licensure interns, as well as experienced psychotherapists who seek to expand their knowledge and skills. It also can serve the needs of course instructors, clinical supervisors, and post-graduate trainers. The first paper presents the architecture of the platform, describing a three-level modular learning system linked to two interactive databases: *Approaches* presents models of psychotherapy and *psychotherapedia*® provides a compendium of techniques, made accessible by incorporating therapist-client dialogues. We discuss UX factors and a proposed pilot study to assess the user experience. A brief tutorial illustrates how the user can interact with the knowledge domains. The second paper describes the process whereby experts in content areas collaborate to create, review, and edit the information in knowledge domains. The final paper explains the process of “technique mining” and the development of classification tools for a comprehensive list of techniques. This database includes therapist-client dialogue demonstrating each technique. We conclude with a brief description of future directions, including research and an SBIR grant proposal.

Keywords: 5-7 online learning, modular learning, psychotherapy, technique mining, professional development

The Architecture of the Learning Platform

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StratPsych®, an online learning platform, is a subscription-based software program that was designed by the developer and created by 3FG Software, LLC. StratPsych® was built with the multimedia principle in mind (<https://sites.google.com/site/cognitivetheorymlearning/home>), providing a combination of text, images, and videos. When the content scrolls, automatic updates show the user exactly where they are within a learning section. Spaces between images and content are kept to a minimum, applying the contiguity principles to assure less work for the learner’s brain to associate the image with the content. The core of the platform is built on a relational database and robust API’s, allowing administrators to quickly update, add, or remove e-learning sections. The platform structure

provides opportunities to partner with other online organizational platforms. The content includes a three-level modularized learning system that progresses through basic, intermediate and advanced material. Within each module are hyperlinks that connect users to knowledge within the platform as well as elsewhere on the internet. Video material for each module allows the user to learn from some of the masters of various approaches. At the end of each module is a quiz for mastery along with links to two content sections, one containing relevant approaches to psychotherapy and the second, called *psychotherapedia*®, providing a selection of techniques that are most relevant to that module. The platform was built for four user groups: psychotherapists from all disciplines; graduate students in behavioral and mental health programs along with their instructors; supervisors of psychotherapists; and advanced psychotherapy training institutes. The abstract for the individual presentation should go here. Limit of 250 words.

Methods of Developing, Curating, and Moderating Content

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The vision for the platform is unification of the diverse knowledge domains and approaches to psychotherapy. Advances in technology provided the opportunity to create an interactive knowledge framework including basic, intermediate, and advanced modules; treatment approaches; and techniques. The knowledge base for this platform evolved over three decades through extensive review of both scholarly articles in peer review journals and books written by experts in the fields of clinical science and practice. A study group (two psychologists and three psychiatrists) observed videotapes of psychotherapy to distill essential elements associated with clinical efficacy. The primary developer has achieved expert status, demonstrated by over 30 years of scholarly and clinical experience, producing 12 published books, numerous articles in peer reviewed journals and two APA psychotherapy videos. From this combination of scholarly research and clinical experience, the developer identified core elements of psychotherapeutics, such as principles, concepts, approaches, techniques, and clinical processes and then invited experts to provide content. This unified framework was vetted by experts through feedback to publications and critical review of content. Ongoing review of the material by experts is intended to reduce bias, increase clarity, and fill gaps. These processes of creation and review are now well-established, permitting the content to be updated and continually curated to provide the optimum learner experience.

Technique Mining: Creating and Updating a Compendium of Psychotherapeutic Techniques

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Psychotherapedia® is a database of psychotherapy techniques, the smallest units of behavioral and mental health treatment. These units of change specify actions on the part of the therapist within a therapy session. Each approach to psychotherapy has a defined set of therapeutic behaviors. Our aim was to unify all of these techniques into an accessible compendium, with hyperlinks to relevant learning modules and therapeutic approaches. While there is substantial research evidence for efficacy of therapeutic approaches, no such evidence exists for specific techniques. The list of techniques was developed in stages. We canvassed recognized experts who submitted lists of techniques. Our development team combined lists into a single list, eliminating redundancy, and then entered them into a database. We created a template for each technique that included a concise definition, classification by theoretical orientation, explanation of the main goal of the technique, samples of therapist-client dialogue, references, and a rating system to indicate (a) expected impact on client change, and (b) risk level. A team of research assistants and senior investigators created and modified content for templates through systematic search of books, scholarly articles, video

demonstrations, and professional websites, in a process we call “technique mining.” This *Psychincubator*® team met weekly to review and revise the written material, role play and improve the dialogue, and achieve reliability in use of rating scales. Use of the *psychotherapedia*® database will provide users with resources for the development of psychotherapeutic competence, including personalized treatment planning.