A pilot randomised controlled trial of a home-based writing intervention for individuals with a seizure disorder

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Abstract (300 word limit)

Objective: Writing therapies have been found to be associated with a range of qualitative and quantitative benefits in clinical and non-clinical samples (1-3). We investigated the feasibility, acceptability and preliminary effectiveness of a home-based writing intervention for individuals with epilepsy or psychogenic nonepileptic seizures. **Methods:** Individuals recruited from outpatient neurology clinics or membership-led organisations were either randomised to a control (n=25) or therapeutic writing condition (n=43). Participants in the control group were asked to write about emotionally devoid topics (their daily events), whereas those allocated to the therapeutic condition were instructed to write about: their very deepest thoughts and feelings about their condition (1); a letter to their condition (2); a letter to their younger self (3); and about a personal value (4). Participants were asked to write for at least 20 minutes per question, at home and in private. Repeated-measures analysis of variance was used to investigate changes in measures of health-related quality of life (NEWQoL-6D), depression (NDDI-E), anxiety (GAD-7) and illness perception (B-IPQ) from baseline to one and three-months follow-ups. Qualitative and quantitative data taken from a Writing Task Questionnaire was analysed between the two writing conditions. **Results:** Individuals in the therapeutic condition reported having engaged in greater emotional and cognitive expression, felt that writing had a positive effect ($p>0.05$) and reported a greater range of benefits. These participants also demonstrated a significant improvement in health-related quality of life one-month following the writing intervention - effect size=0.65. **Conclusion:** Based on rates of attrition, a writing intervention in individuals with seizures was found to be acceptable (4). Whilst a number of benefits of writing were reported, future research should aim to investigate the use of writing as a supplement to other psychological therapies in those with a seizure disorder (5).

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Biography (150 word limit)

Gregg H. Rawlings is a PhD student studying clinical neuroscience at the University of Sheffield. Gregg has a BSc in psychology and an MSc in clinical and health psychology, both from Newcastle University. His PhD thesis involves using qualitative and quantitative methodologies to investigate the subjective experience of living with epilepsy or psychogenic nonepileptic seizures. He is examining the diagnostic, prognostic and treatment implications of patients' experiences. He is also currently editing a book that focuses on the personal accounts of living with nonepileptic seizures, which will be published by Oxford University Press as part of the "Brainstorm" series authored by Prof. Schachter (Harvard University). His previous roles include working with patients who experience a range of mental health issues on a 1-1 and group therapy basis within the NHS and charitable organisations.

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