

Feasibility of Virtual Group Speech Pathology for Chronic Cough

Kate Baumwol¹, Annalise Chapman¹ & John Blakey^{1,2}

¹Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Osborne Park Health Care Group, ² Medical School Curtin University

Introduction

- Chronic Cough is a cough that continues for over 8 weeks.
- It remains a primary reason for seeking medical consultation.
- Chronic cough is associated with adverse physical and psychosocial effects. [1]
- Speech Pathology is a well-established intervention [2], however individual therapy is resource intensive and repetitive.
- At Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (SCGH) the individual therapy waitlist is six months.
- Group-based interventions may enhance patient outcomes by facilitating peer support and increasing service efficiency.

10% of middle-aged Australians have a chronic cough [3]



Aim

- To evaluate the acceptability and feasibility of a virtual group therapy program for chronic cough.

Methods

- An evidenced based three session live online program was developed by SCGH Speech Pathology and Clinical Psychology. The program integrated both chronic cough suppression education, and cognitive-behavioural strategies.
- Participants were recruited from the individual Speech Pathology cough therapy waitlist.
- Four group cycles were completed.
- The following outcomes were collected:
 - Enrolment and attendance rates
 - Patient reported outcomes (PROMS): Leicester Cough Questionnaire (LCQ) and Newcastle Laryngeal Hypersensitivity Questionnaire (NLHQ),
 - Patient satisfaction via survey
 - Occasions of service rates

Results



50% reduction in clinician time compared to usual individual care (25 occasions of service across 12 sessions)



100% of survey respondents (7/7) reported being satisfied with the group, no participants expressing a preference for individual therapy



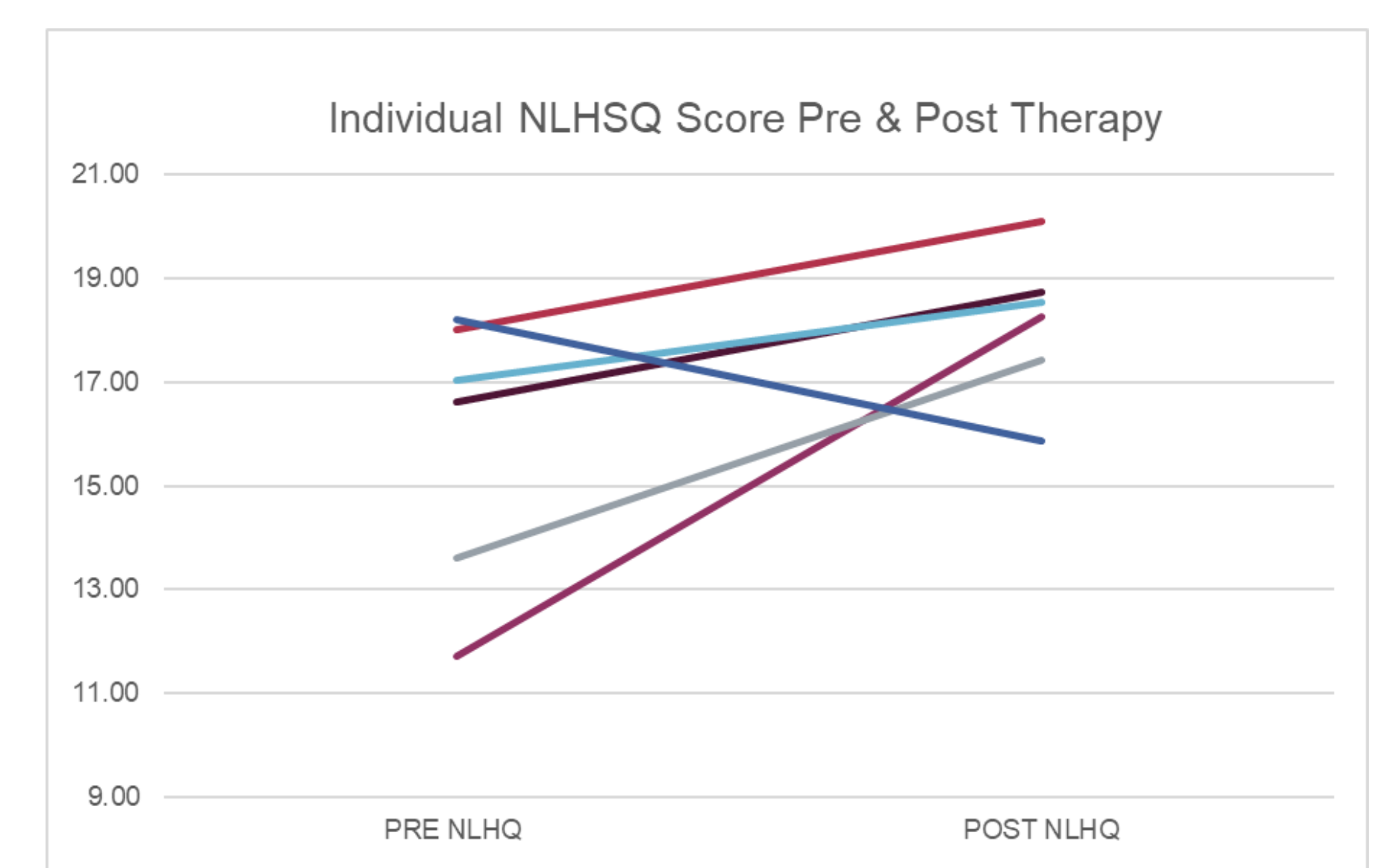
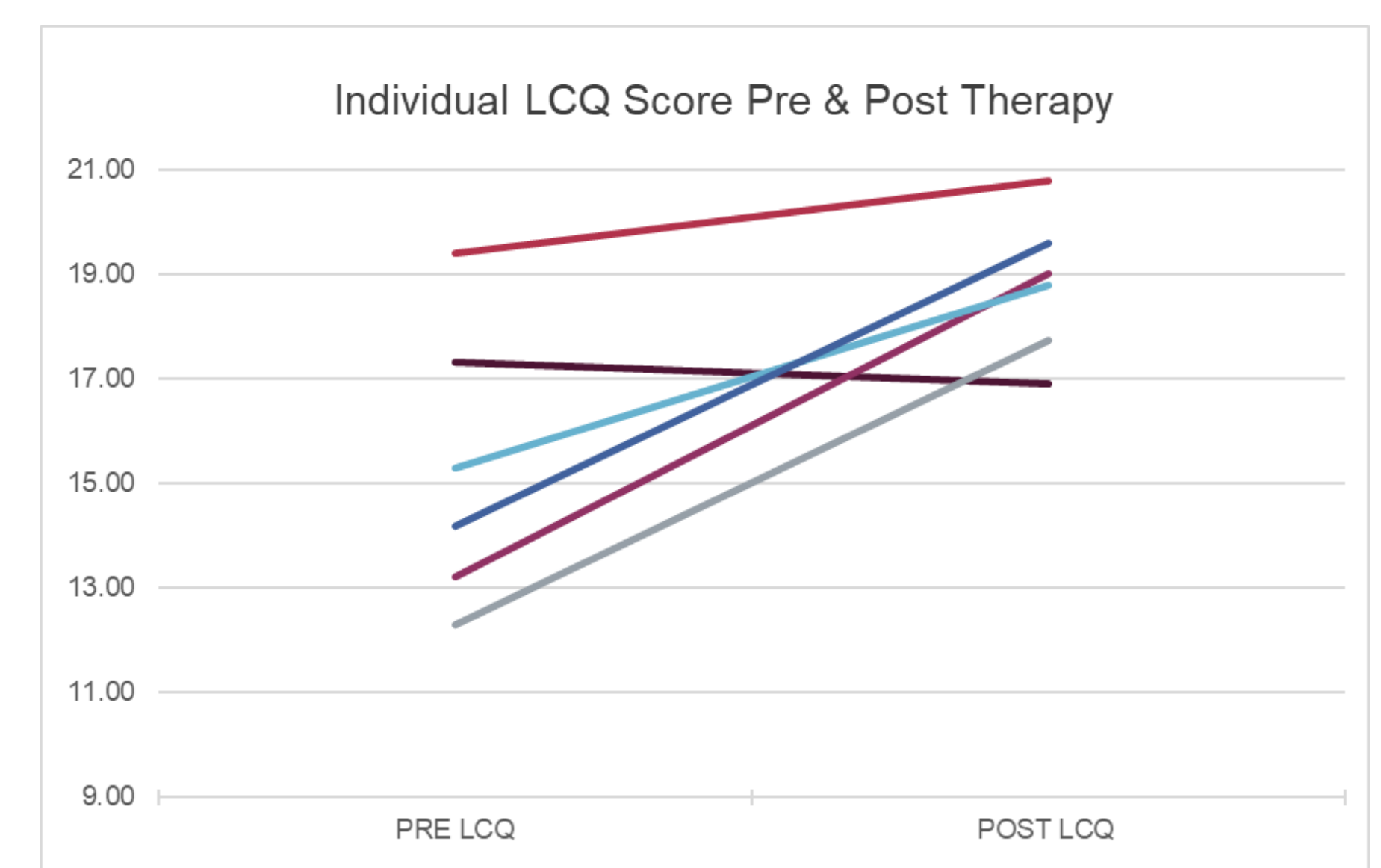
Participation targets of 80% were not met; actual enrolment into the program **44%** (15 enrolled /35 invited)



Minimal clinically important improvement was observed in **91.7%** of collected PROMS across the LCQ and NLHQ



Attendance rates declined from 80% in the first session to 38.5% by the final session



Conclusion

- This interdisciplinary virtual group program was acceptable to those who attended and feasible to run.
- The program demonstrates promising patient reported outcomes and high patient satisfaction while enhancing service capacity.
- Primary barriers to enrolment and attendance included; limited access to telehealth technology, scheduling conflicts and unintentional non-attendance.
- Future service design must address digital access and scheduling flexibility to improve recruitment and sustained engagement.

Acknowledgements

- Research was funded by Charlies Foundation of Research Bright Ideas Grant
- Paige Buissink Clinical Psychologist Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital

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Contact:

Kate Baumwol Senior Speech Pathologist
kate.Baumwol@health.wa.gov.au