Growing evidence suggests that the effects of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, an effective treatment for depression, can be enhanced by specific elements of the professional relationship between practitioner and patient. While such elements have significant implications for clinical practice (e.g., expressed empathy, developing and maintaining a working alliance, and active collaboration in-session), the issue has not been comprehensively investigated. Two major obstacles have been the lack of systematic review of the existing evidence, and instruments to measure and characterize the practitioner-patient relationship (i.e., “therapeutic relationship.”)

The PhD project will:
1. systematically and quantitatively review the evidence for practitioner-patient relationship elements across a range of models including CBT; and
2. develop and test a new instrument of the practitioner-patient relationship in CBT for severe depression.

The PhD candidate will examine the question of whether natural variations in practitioner-patient relationships can predict which individuals with depression will be most (or least) adherent with CBT techniques; and respond best (or worst) at 6-12-18-24 months follow-up. The research will be carried out within CBTRU (www.med.monash.edu/psych/cbtru/) and supervised by A/Prof Kazantzis (Psychology). The review will also be co-supervised by Dr. Whittington (Assoc. Director, Centre for Outcomes Research & Effectiveness, UCL), and the instrument design and evaluation by Prof. Dobson (Univ. Calgary) and Prof. Hofmann (Boston Univ.)

This research will enable the candidate to perform reviews (systematic and meta-analytic reviews), develop advanced skills in clinical trial methodology (fidelity assessments involving both practitioner adherence/competence), psychometric testing, data analysis (multi-level modeling, marginal modeling), and develop an advanced understanding of CBT for severe depression.

For further information, please contact:
Associate Professor Nikolaos Kazantzis
Email: Nikolaos.Kazantzis@monash.edu

Note: student must have an APA or equivalent scholarship in 2015 in order to be eligible for the top up.