

## **Can metacognitive beliefs and mindfulness differentiate between levels of cyberchondria?**

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Cyberchondria, an elevated health anxiety due to on-line health searches, has gained much research interest. Yet, it is still unclear why in some cases health searches result in distress and in others do not. Recent study suggests that a metacognitive conceptualization of cyberchondria might be appropriate. Metacognitive beliefs related to health anxiety, especially beliefs about uncontrollability of thoughts, appear to share a unique association with cyberchondria. These metacognitions lead to use of self-regulation strategies, such as thought control, which in turn maintain or exacerbate health anxiety and excessive Internet use as a diagnostic tool.

It has been suggested that mindfulness is also a metacognitive phenomenon since it includes conscious regulation of cognitions and meta-awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, and sensations as events in the mind. As opposed to metacognitive beliefs, which induce monitoring and judging thoughts leading to avoidance or attempts to control inner experiences, mindfulness implies being aware of this process of judgment and accepting inner experiences as they emerge.

The aim of this study was to examine whether health anxiety related metacognitive beliefs and mindfulness can differentiate between different levels of cyberchondria. Participants were recruited via an on-line survey. Data on cyberchondria, metacognitive beliefs, mindfulness, health anxiety and Internet behaviors were obtained. A discriminant analysis will be conducted. Results will be interpreted within a metacognitive conceptualization of cyberchondria. Possible mindfulness-based treatment strategies for cyberchondria will be proposed.