

# School Refusal in Adolescents



# School Refusal in Adolescents

## Efficiency of a Cognitive and Behavioral Therapy (CBT) programme for outpatient treatment in France.

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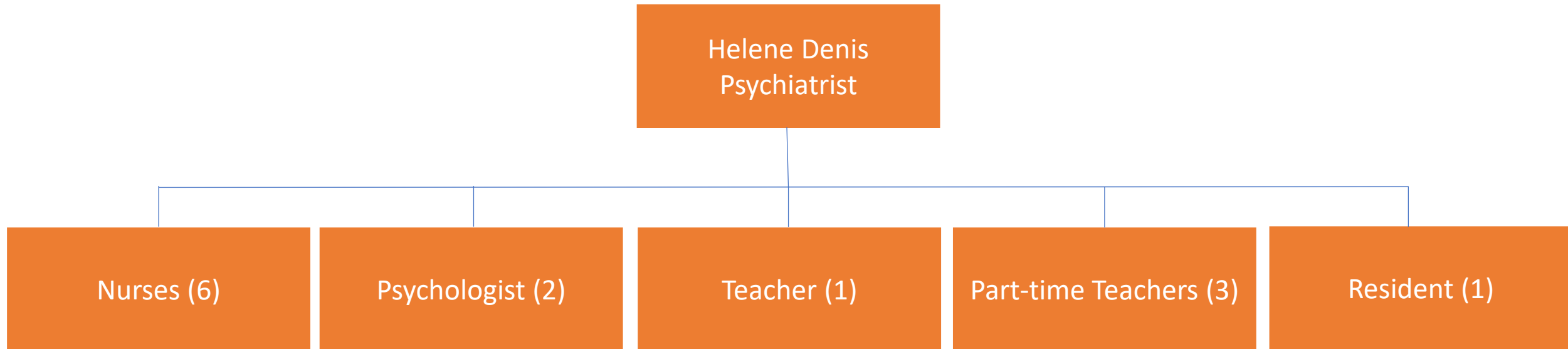
# Anxious School Refusal (ASR)

- Common disorder belonging to the anxiety disorder spectrum
- Definition
  - 'behavior of children and adolescents who, for irrational reasons, refuse to go to school and resist with severe anxiety or panic when they are forced'
- Anxiety disorder is becoming increasingly frequent
  - Affects between 5% and 28% of children or adolescents during their school life
  - One of the most common reasons for consulting a child psychiatrist in France

# Anxious School Refusal (ASR)

- Berg, Nichols and Pritchard (1969) criteria
  - Persistent difficulties in attending school
  - Severe emotional upset including excessive fearfulness, temper outbursts or complaints of feeling ill when faced with the prospect of going to school
  - Absent from school with parents knowledge
  - The absence of severe anti-social behavior/ conduct disorder

# Our Team



# Our CBT Programme

- Part time day hospitalization 4 times per week
- Normal school education with a teacher
- Individual and group CBT (manualized programme)
- 5 adolescents between 11 and 16 years old per group
- Parents are included in individual sessions and specific parent group sessions (3 times per year)

# Our CBT Programme

- 1 or 2 individual CBT sessions/week
  - Conceptualization
  - Individualized CBT programme
  - Cognitive restructuring
  - Specific progressive exposure
- Group CBT sessions
  - Relaxation training
  - Assertiveness and self esteem, coping skills
  - Progressive exposure in front of and inside the school
  - Problem solving to prepare for all situations that cause anxiety before returning to school



# Our CBT Programme

- Initially
  - Patients do not attend school
  - School lessons are held in the hospital
  - Regular contact is maintained with school teams
- When patients are ready
  - Progressive return to school as behavioral expositions
    - 2 hours per week, accompanied by a nurse the first 3 times
  - Subsequently, gradually attend school independently
  - Close contact with the nurse by phone
  - Patients continue to attend once a week in day hospitalization

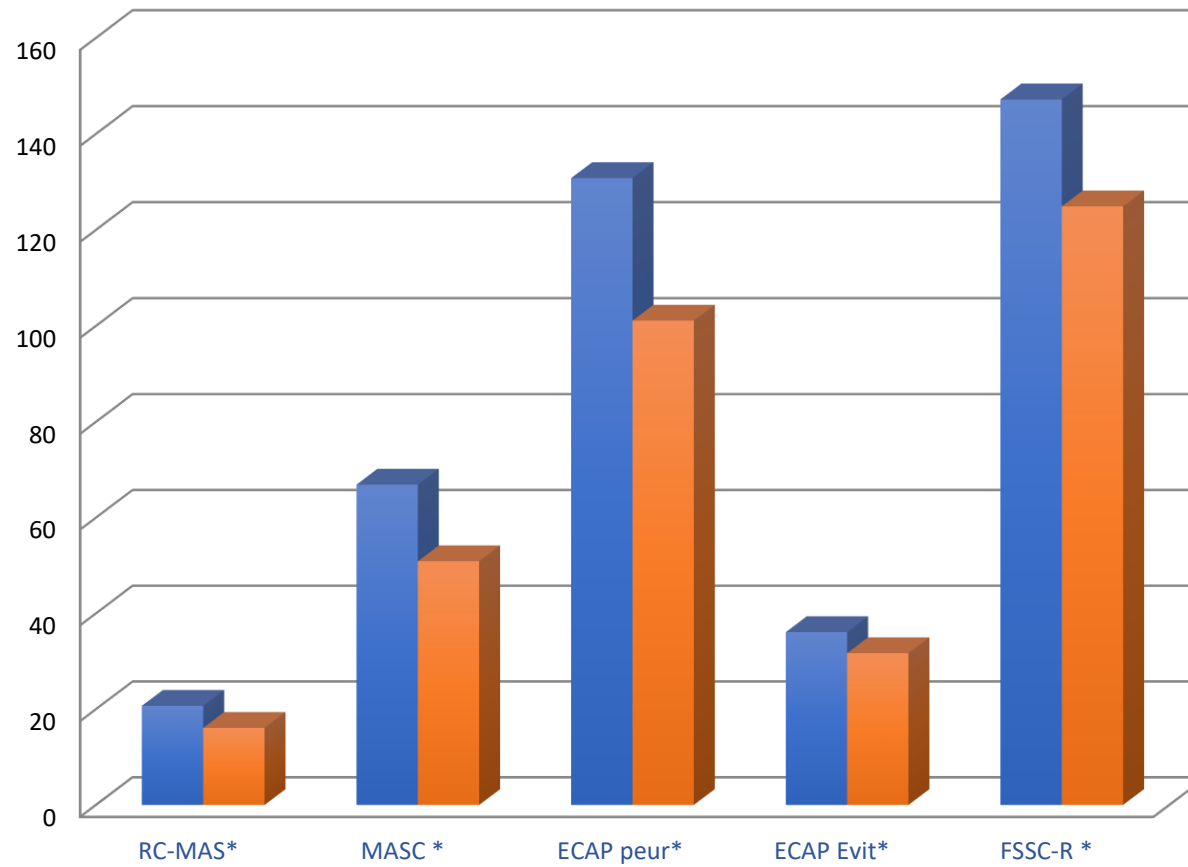
# Programme Effectiveness

- Effectiveness of this program
  - A cohort of 36 patients
  - Treated between September 2014 and December 2018
  - C-GAS: overall functioning
  - CGI scales : clinical improvement
  - RC-MAS, MASC, ECAP and FSSC R scales : anxious scales
  - Scores obtained at the beginning and end of hospitalization

# Results

- 1 patient dropped out before the end
- 2 patients completed the programme but did not return to school
- 33 patients have returned to school partially after 15 (SD: 6) weeks of treatment on average
- 30 patients have returned to school full time in September after the beginning of the program

# Results



Key

Before

After

\* Significative (Wilcoxon 0,001 )

# Conclusion

- This CBT program for school refusal performed in a day hospital setting
  - Is effective
  - Allows partial attendance in school within the year
  - Full return to school the year after for the majority of patients
- Key points
  - Intensive CBT (4 sessions / week) for these severe disorders
  - Double CBT format : individual and group
  - Flexible and personalized CBT program
  - Therapeutic alliance and strong group dynamic
  - Very progressive return to school, accompanied initially by a mental health professional
  - Support for parents by a mental health team comprising of nurses, psychologist and psychiatrist
- Further studies and monitoring of patients are needed to better characterize the effectiveness of this support



# References

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# Questions?

Please be gentle with me, my English is not perfect...