We found a systematic review (attached) which we wanted to share our related thoughts with you:

Varker, T., Kartal, D., Watson, L., Freijah, I., O’Donnell, M., Forbes, D., ... & Hinton, M.

(2020). Defining response and nonresponse to posttraumatic stress disorder treatments: A systematic review. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, *27*(4), e12355.

In this review, they looked at how “treatment response” is being defined in the literature by synthesizing key criteria used to define “treatment response” and “-nonresponse” from 143 published trials.

In line with our existing thoughts, there is a lack of clear definition on what constitutes treatment response or nonresponse. Overall, they gathered 226 definitions of treatment response and grouped these definitions into five main categories: treatment response, remission, recovery, treatment nonresponse, and worsening. But within these groupings, there was variability in specific definitions.

Notable Conceptualizations:

Nonresponse was defined as achieving minimal to no symptomatic improvement at post-treatment.

Treatment response was defined as a significant pre- to post-treatment symptom reduction.

Once placed in a response category, definitions were further subcategorized based on details reported in the studies. These further categories distinguished between (a) use of a clinician- and self-rated measures; and (b) how studies defined change in PTSD outcomes (i.e. score or percentage reduction, cutoff score, a statistically derived formula, or diagnostic criteria plus functional assessments).

Treatment Response Definitions:

1. minimum score reduction on a clinician-rated or self-report PTSD measure
   1. The CAPS was the only clinician-rated measure used, with trials requiring a minimum score reduction of either 10 points, 12 points, 15 points, or 20 points.
2. a minimum percentage reduction on a clinician-rated or self-report PTSD measure scores
   1. 30% reduction on CAPS-IV
3. meeting a predefined cutoff score for a clinician-rated or self-report PTSD measure
   1. ≤20 on either the CAPS-IV or PSS-I
   2. 8.8 points on PCL
   3. 20 points on PDS
4. a cutoff score on a clinician-rated or self-report PTSD measure, using a predefined statistical formula
   1. Jacobson and Truax's (1991) formula was predominately used for definitions using a cutoff score derived from a statistical formula.
      1. The formula is used to determine whether a change in an individual's score is clinically significant. An individual is considered to have made clinically significant improvement if their post-treatment scores move outside the range of the population of those with a disorder, or within the range of scores of the population with no disorder

See: Jacobson, N. S., & Truax, P. (1991). Clinical Significance: A Statistical Approach to Denning Meaningful Change in Psychotherapy Research. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *59*(1), 12–19.

Non-Response Definitions:

1. Failure to meet the treatment response definition
2. Deterioration in function only
   1. Duke Improvement Scale >2

The paper also discusses how nonresponse should be differentiated from worsening or treatment resistance.

The review identified a preference for defining treatment response using either a predetermined percentage or score reduction in symptom severity, or a cutoff symptom score on a clinician-rated assessment.

Varker et al. (2020) recommend defining treatment response as a reduction of baseline symptomatology of 30%–50%, a clinically meaningful response on the CAPS-IV as 15 points, and including other symptom or functioning measures in more rigorous definitions of treatment response.

So now what does this mean for us, especially related to justifying our own definitions of treatment response?

● There was limited data defining response using PCL or self-report measures

○ Assumptively, this is representative of the literature?

● Clinically meaningful response criteria was based on CAPS-IV

● Only 17 out of 143 papers reported definitions for non-response/worsening, of these 5 defined non-response as the failure to meet treatment response definition or deterioration in function only (re: Duke Improvement Scale > 2)

● Is there further/more refined searching that we can do?

○ This review is comprehensive, recent, seems to capture what we were looking for

Additionally, we found this commentary on this paper and figured we’d share as well:

Larsen, S. E., Sippel, L. M., & Schnurr, P. P. (2020). Let’s all get on the same page: A commentary on “Defining response and nonresponse to PTSD treatments: A systematic review”. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, *27*(4).<https://doi.org/10.1111/cpsp.12364>

Much Appreciation,

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