

Procrastination is a fairly common disorder in which people voluntarily but irrationally delay some tasks, despite the awareness that this may hinder the performance of these tasks (or result in a low performance), lead to discomfort and reduce the quality of life. The negative effects of procrastination can be observed not only in the life of individuals affected by this problem but also on the socio-economic level (e.g. as a result of a delayed payment of taxes) and in the health protection system (e.g. as a result of delayed doctor visits). Scientists estimate that procrastination affects 15-20% of the general population, and up to 50% (or even 80-95%) of students. Despite the high prevalence of procrastination, there are only a few therapeutic programs aimed at reducing procrastination and there is too little scientific evidence on the effectiveness and mechanisms of these programs.

In the present project, we intend to compare the neuronal and psychological mechanisms of action and the effectiveness of two short-term procrastination therapy programs based on the assumptions of cognitive-behavioural approach. These programs are designed to help change dysfunctional thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that lead to procrastination. Both consist of five 1.5-hour sessions that take place in groups of 5 to 7 patients led by two therapists. Both programs contain similar psychoeducation elements and require participants to introduce and monitor new behaviours. However, these programs differ in the type of behaviour they aim to change. One of them focuses on behaviours related to an effective work schedule and timely beginning of work, as well as on ensuring an appropriate work environment. The second program does not introduce these elements, but it mainly aims at implementing and monitoring the principle of working time restriction with possibility of gradually increasing the working time when previous, shorter time windows, were effectively used.

In this project, we will investigate whether the presence of any of the different elements of these programs leads to an increased efficiency in reducing procrastination and other related mental problems (e.g. depressiveness or excessive anxiety). We also intend to investigate the psychological and neural mechanisms of changes resulting from the two therapy programs. The changes on psychological level will be assessed with a number of questionnaire tools, while neuronal mechanisms will be monitored using the functional magnetic resonance imaging and electroencephalography.

The results obtained during the project will undoubtedly contribute to obtaining important information in the field of research on the mechanisms and effectiveness of procrastination treatment. We hope that it will help to improve the ways of dealing with this common problem.