



OPTIMISING THE PRIMARY MENTAL HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE

HOW CAN EFFECTIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENTS FOR COMMON MENTAL DISORDERS BEST BE DELIVERED IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE?

DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL PRACTICE, SCHOOL OF POPULATION
HEALTH & SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
SCHOOL OF HEALTH & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

Moulding R
Blashki G
Gunn J
Mihalopoulos C
Pirkis J
Naccarella L
Joubert L

POLICY CONTEXT

The [Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care](#) and [Better Access](#) policy initiatives have expanded consumer access to psychological treatments. These programs fund treatments provided by health professionals including general practitioners (GPs), psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists and Indigenous health workers.

We reviewed the evidence for the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of psychological treatments given by these providers to primary health care populations experiencing anxiety and depression. We explored the evidence for, and the components of, collaborative models of mental health care.

KEY FINDINGS

- GPs delivery of problem-solving therapy for depression is superior to usual treatment and equivalent to treatment with antidepressant medication. No studies on the cost-effectiveness of GP-delivered psychological treatments were identified
- Psychotherapy provided by psychologists is as effective as medication and is superior to usual treatment for depression. Interventions provided by psychologists represent good value-for-money
- In primary health care settings, collaborative interventions involving psychotherapy, multi-professional approaches, structured management plans, scheduled follow-up and enhanced communication are superior to usual treatment for depression, panic disorder and generalised anxiety disorder. Limited evidence suggests these interventions are cost-effective for depression and panic disorder
- Some evidence shows social workers effectively deliver psychological therapies for depression and anxiety. No studies identified regarding the effectiveness of psychotherapy delivered by occupational therapists and Indigenous health workers

For more details, go to the [three page report](#).

The research reported in this paper is a project of the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute, which is supported by a grant from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing under the Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy. The information and opinions contained in it do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.