

P.E.A.R.L.S. Practical Evidence About Real Life Situations



Psychological therapy based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) principles is effective in reducing anxiety symptoms for short-term treatment of generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)

Clinical Question	How effective are psychological therapies, such as CBT, psychodynamic therapy and supportive therapy, compared with treatment as usual/waiting list (TAU/WL) and compared to one another, for patients with GAD?
Bottom Line	Psychological therapy based on CBT principles is effective in reducing anxiety symptoms and secondary symptoms of worry and depression for short-term treatment of GAD (NNT=5). It is not clear whether patients attending for CBT sessions are more likely to have reduced anxiety at the end of treatment than patients attending for psychodynamic therapy or supportive therapy.
Context	GAD is a common disorder, characterised by excessive worry or anxiety about everyday events and problems. It is estimated to have a lifetime prevalence of 5.1% with a 12 month prevalence measurement of 3.1%.
Caveat	Patients who attend for group CBT and older patients are more likely to drop out of therapy. None of the studies looked at the long-term effectiveness of CBT (the mean length of trial was 8 months), or reported on the possible side-effects or acceptability of psychological therapies.
Reference	Hunot V et al. Psychological therapies for generalised anxiety disorder . Cochrane Reviews, 2007, Issue 1. This review contains 25 studies with 1305 participants. Kessler RC et al. Arch Gen Psychiatry 1994 ;51 :8-19.
Date (Author)	March 2007 (Brian R McAvoy)

NNT = numbers needed to treat to benefit one person

NNH = numbers needed to harm one person

Both NNT and NNH are only reported if the studies or pooling of studies is statistically significant

Disclaimer : The P.E.A.R.L.S. are for educational use only and are not meant to guide clinical activity nor are they a clinical guideline