

## Psychological treatments for depression and anxiety effective in dementia and mild cognitive impairment

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**Clinical Question**

How effective are psychological treatments in reducing depression and anxiety in dementia and mild cognitive impairment?

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**Bottom Line**

Psychological treatments added to usual care reduced symptoms of depression and clinician-rated anxiety for people with dementia. It was not possible to tell whether psychological treatments had an effect on patients' quality of life (QOL), ability to perform activities of daily living (ADL), overall psychiatric symptoms, or cognition, or on carers' self-rated depressive symptoms; most studies did not measure these outcomes. The psychological treatments used were based on established psychological models, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, counselling, and interpersonal psychodynamic therapy. In two trials, the psychological treatment was combined with other interventions. Psychological treatments for people with dementia appeared to be safe, with no adverse events reported in the literature.

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**Caveat**

There were only a small number of studies, and there was variation between them in the type and duration of psychological treatment. There were no trials of participants with mild cognitive impairment. Five of the six trials were at unclear or high risk of bias due to uncertainties around randomisation, blinding and selective reporting of results.

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**Context**

Symptoms of depression and anxiety are common in people with dementia and mild cognitive impairment. Although treatment of these symptoms is widely recommended in guidelines, the best way to do this is not clear. Drugs are thought to have limited effectiveness in this context and carry the risk of significant side effects. Psychological treatments can be adapted for use with people with cognitive impairment and may offer an alternative.

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**Cochrane Systematic Review**

Orgeta V et al. Psychological treatments for depression and anxiety in dementia and mild cognitive

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impairment. Cochrane Reviews. 2014, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD009125.DOI: 10.1002/14651858. CD009125.pub2. This review contains 6 studies involving 439 participants.

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## STATEMENTS/DISCLAIMERS

PEARLS summarise Cochrane reviews that are relevant to primary care. They contain the minimal information required for a clinician to either use an effective treatment or stop using an ineffective treatment. Where available they will contain numbers needed to treat and to harm.

PEARLS are created to assist with the dissemination of Cochrane reviews.

PEARLS are developed for trained health professionals in primary care. They are educational only and not meant to advise on specific clinical treatment.