

# Childhood depression: a place for psychotherapy

An outcome study comparing individual psychodynamic psychotherapy and family therapy

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## Abstract

### Background

Although considered clinically effective, there is little systematic research confirming the use of Individual Psychodynamic Psychotherapy or Family Therapy as treatments for depression in children and young adolescents.

### Aims

A clinical trial assessed the effectiveness of these two forms of psychotherapy in treating moderate and severe depression in this age group.

### Methods

A randomised control trial was conducted with 72 patients aged 9–15 years allocated to one of two treatment groups.

### Results

Significant reductions in disorder rates were seen for both Individual Therapy and Family Therapy. A total of 74.3% of cases were no longer clinically depressed following Individual Therapy and 75.7% of cases were no longer clinically depressed following Family Therapy. This included cases of Dysthymia and “Double Depression” (co-existing Major Depressive Disorder and Dysthymia). There was also an overall reduction in co-morbid conditions across the study. The changes in both treatment groups were persistent and there was ongoing improvement. At follow up six months after treatment had ended, 100% of cases in the Individual Therapy group, and 81% of cases in the Family Therapy group were no longer clinically depressed.

### Conclusions

This study provides evidence supporting the use of focused forms of both Individual Psychodynamic Therapy and Family Therapy for moderate to severe depression in children and young adolescents.

**Keywords**

treatment childhood depression individual psychotherapy family therapy

Original lead researcher: Prof Issy Kolvin (deceased).

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