

PREFACE

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Research into psychotherapy and psychological therapies has been slow to gather speed. Many methodological difficulties have been encountered when investigators have tried to study such complex psychosocial interventions. However, these methodological difficulties are being overcome and a strong evidence base of research is beginning to accumulate. The Irish Council for Psychotherapy therefore decided to commission Professor Alan Carr of University College Dublin to review the literature on the Effectiveness of Psychotherapy, with particular reference to mental health disorders.

In 1952, Eysenck reported in an early research paper, that patients undertaking psychotherapy were no better off than patients on a waiting list. (1) In the late 1970's, Smith and Glass found the different modalities of psychotherapy looked at in their study to have moderate efficacy and a similar effect size (2). Now, 20 years on, we can say with some degree of certainty that psychotherapy is becoming more strongly evidence based and that research in this area is showing that psychotherapy can be effective and even highly effective. This includes being effective with the most complex of psychological difficulties and even with those with the most profound mental health problems. This review is therefore timely as it seeks to collate the most recent evidence for the effectiveness of psychotherapy.

Professors Carr's review is detailed and shows the evidence for the effectiveness of psychotherapy with an extensive range of internationally classified (ICD 10 – DSMIV) mental health disorders. He lists the classified disorders and shows which psychotherapies have been researched and found to be helpful.

In the third chapter this paper, Professor Carr has focussed on common features of successful therapy, which include the development of a strong therapeutic relationship, manualised protocols and, ideally, at least six months treatment with a well trained psychotherapist. This evidence ex-

tends our knowledge of what is effective, moving from brief manualised psychotherapies provided by therapists who have had short training programmes and begins to show that longer term psychotherapy provided by more highly qualified psychotherapists increases the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic interventions, particularly with patients with more problematic mental health disorders. This review suggests, therefore, that we need to broaden the scope of provision from brief interventions using counsellors to more complex interventions which psychotherapists are best placed to deliver.

This review makes it clear that all the evidence is stacking up in favour of including more psychotherapy within the normal range of health service provision, both at primary care, secondary and tertiary care levels. Eysenck asked the question and psychotherapists and psychotherapy researchers have answered loud and clear – they have found psychotherapy to be effective and the evidence is still rolling in. This evidence base then places psychotherapy where it belongs, in the front and centre of healthcare provision in the developed world for the 21st century.

The Irish Council for Psychotherapy has been self-regulating psychotherapy training and professional standards throughout the last 15 years, and only admits to its Register professionals who are well trained to deliver psychotherapeutic interventions. It is currently developing competence assurance systems for its registrants to ensure that psychotherapists on the register are maintaining their ability to remain up to date and practice competently within a modern context. As can be seen from Professor Carr's review, the amount of training that a psychotherapist receives does have an effect on outcome.

The Irish Council for Psychotherapy (ICP) wishes to recommend this volume to key stakeholders to read and take the messages that are contained therein. The Irish Council for Psychotherapy is eager to work alongside service providers and commissioners in order to ensure that those requiring psychotherapeutic services can access the necessary expertise. The ICP has over 1,000 registered psychotherapists throughout Ireland..

Professor Carr has clearly made the case for

stakeholders and commissioners of service to look at funding psychotherapy services and resources within the Health Service Executive (HSE), so that all patients can have adequate access to much needed psychotherapeutic help. It is with considerable satisfaction that I, as Chair of the Irish Council for Psychotherapy, commend to you this scientific review of the research literature into the Effectiveness of Psychotherapy. Professor Carr, in my view, has completed a comprehensive overview of this field .

References:

- (1) Eysenck, H.J. (1952) "The Effects of Psychotherapy: An Evaluation".
J Cons Psychol, XVI, 319-24.

- (2) Smith, M.L. and Glass, G.V. (1977)
"Meta-analysis of Psychotherapy Outcome Studies". American Psych, J. 1977. Vol 32.

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