

Counselling Madrid Newsletter

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Antidepressant use rises as recession feeds wave of worry

The number of antidepressants prescribed by the NHS has almost doubled in the last decade, and rose sharply last year as the recession bit, figures reveal. The health service issued 39.1m prescriptions for drugs to tackle depression in England in 2009, compared with 20.1m in 1999 - a 95 per cent jump.

Doctors handed out 3.18m more prescriptions last year than in 2008, almost twice the annual rise seen in preceding years, according to

previously unpublished statistics released by the NHS's Business Services Authority. The increase is thought to be due in part to improved diagnosis, reduced stigma around mental ill-health and rising worries about jobs and finances triggered by the economic downturn.

But doctors warn that some people are being put on the drugs unnecessarily, especially those with milder symptoms of depression,

partly because there is too little access to talking therapies. "I'm concerned that too many people are being prescribed antidepressants and not being given counselling and cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), because access to those therapies, while it is improving, is still patchy", said Professor Steve Field, the chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners.

The Guardian

Brief interventions as effective as usual GP care for depression

Brief interventions that deliver counselling, problem solving therapy (PST) and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in general practice are equally effective as treatments for depression and anxiety, a study shows. The latest research evidence in support of psychological therapies comes days after the Coalition Government committed itself to "broaden the range of therapies available", in the light of growing concerns that CBT was being invested in at the expense of other clinically useful therapies.

The meta-analysis published in BMC Medicine, found six sessions in all three forms of psychological therapy were equally effective in patients with either depression or mixed anxiety with depression.

UK researchers analysed 34 studies involving 3,962 patients - 22 of which were conducted in UK primary care. Of these, 13 trials delivered CBT, eight counselling and 12 PST. There were small effects favouring CBT over usual GP care for both depression and mixed anxiety and depression. There was a larger effect for brief CBT for anxiety disorder. All differences were statistically significant. The effect sizes for CBT for anxiety and depression translated to a 2.3 point difference between groups offered a brief intervention and those given usual care on the Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression, and a 7.2 point improvement on the Hamilton Rating Scale for Anxiety. But other therapies also

showed benefits. Counselling was effective for mixed anxiety and depression. The effect size was smaller for PST for both depression, and mixed anxiety and depression.

Lead researcher Dr John Cape, head of psychological therapies at Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, concluded: "Our meta-analysis suggests that brief CBT, counselling and PST were all effective in treating depression and mixed anxiety and depression. No significant difference was found between CBT, counselling and PST." The results came as health secretary Andrew Lansley pledged to continue the Labour Government's commitment to provide 3,600 extra psychological therapists by 2011 and pledged a £70m investment over the next year. However, Paul Farmer, chief executive of Mind, warned: "CBT is just one of a host of therapies that can be prescribed for mental health problems, and many people are still stuck on waiting lists struggling to access other therapies that are absolutely fundamental to mental health care, such as counselling. The new Government should use this as an opportunity to expand IAPT to include the full spectrum of treatments that huge numbers of people need urgently, and many are currently kept waiting for." *Pulse*

Speak to your father - secret to happiness

Children who regularly talk to their fathers are happier than those who do not, according to new research. Young people who talked seriously to their dads "most days" gave themselves an 87 per cent score on a happiness scale compared with 79 per cent for those who said they hardly ever spoke to their fathers in this way. The findings, from an analysis of research from the British Household Panel survey into 1,200 young people in Britain (11 - 15), were released by The Children's Society. The charity said they were "highly significant" as research has shown a child's wellbeing later in life depends on their teenage relationship with their father as well as their mother. It has launched a Fatherhood Commission with children, experts and the public invited to submit evidence on barriers to fathers' involvement with their children. *The Telegraph*