

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy For Depression and Anxiety Disorders

Review 14

Roshanaei-Moghaddam, B., Pauly, M. C., Atkins, D. C., Baldwin, S. A., Stein, M. B., & Roy-Byrne, P. (2011). Relative effects of CBT and pharmacotherapy in depression versus anxiety: Is medication somewhat better for depression, and CBT somewhat better for anxiety? *Depression and Anxiety*, 28, 560–567. PubMed abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21608087>.

Objectives	Determine the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) versus medication in the treatment of depression versus anxiety disorders, and assess whether comorbidity with the other class of disorder (anxiety or depression) moderated effect sizes.
Studies Included	Forty-two U.S. and international studies from 1977 to 2010
Participants in the Studies	Adults diagnosed with major depressive disorder or one of five major anxiety disorders: generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety disorder, panic disorder with or without agoraphobia, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
Settings	Some of the reported settings were primary care locations.
Outcomes	Anxiety and depression symptoms
Limitations of the Studies	There were too few studies of GAD and PTSD to draw conclusions about these disorders; treatments in each of these studies may not have been totally optimized (e.g., highest doses of medication, most well-trained and skilled CBT therapists); the impact or presence of comorbid medical or other psychiatric disorders were not controlled for, limiting generalizability of results.

Results

Meta-analytic results indicated some evidence CBT has an advantage over pharmacotherapy across all anxiety disorders included; however, there were notable differences in effectiveness for specific anxiety disorders:

- Effect sizes for panic disorder significantly favored CBT over pharmacotherapy, and OCD revealed similar, though nonsignificant, effect sizes.
- Patients with social anxiety disorder showed the strongest trend in favor of benefiting from medication compared with CBT, though this was not statistically significant.
- Meta-analytic results indicated no advantage for medications or therapy for the treatment of depression.
- Patients in anxiety studies that included comorbid depression were more likely to benefit from pharmacotherapy, while patients in anxiety studies that excluded depression were more likely to

benefit from CBT; the presence of comorbid anxiety in depression studies had no moderating effect on outcome.

Overall, evidence indicates there are, at most, very modest differences in effects of CBT versus pharmacotherapy in the treatment of anxiety versus depressive disorders.