

Research and Development

Appropriate evidence is required for primary care mental health problems because they are usually very complex and where, in clinical practice, people present themselves with a mixture of mental, physical, social and spiritual problems. Evidence based practice guidelines, such as NICE guidelines, use randomised controlled trial (RCT) type research as the gold standard evidence for their recommendations. However, the RCT evidence methodology usually restricts recommendations to single problems such as anxiety or depression that does not always relate to the complex and individual nature of illness experience. Today, most RCT type research on psychological interventions has been conducted on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). There are however many other interventions for primary care mental health problems e.g. structured counselling for which there is non- RCT evidence of effectiveness that is more appropriate to the patients illness. There is much evidence for the clinical effectiveness of different psychological interventions through outcome based practice that incorporates all of a patients experience and their overall response to the care given. We must build on this work and create an appropriate outcome evidence base to inform service development for primary care mental health. This will offer informed choice of intervention that will result in better quality, patient centred care and enhanced clinical effectiveness.