

Clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of body psychotherapy in the treatment of negative symptoms of schizophrenia: a multicentre randomised controlled trial

Stefan Priebe,^{1*} Mark Savill,¹ Til Wykes,²
Richard Bentall,³ Christoph Lauber,⁴
Ulrich Reininghaus,^{2,5} Paul McCrone,⁶ Iris Mosweu,⁶
Stephen Bremner,⁷ Sandra Eldridge⁸
and Frank Röhricht¹ on behalf of the NESS team

¹Unit for Social and Community Psychiatry, World Health Organization Collaborative Centre for Mental Health Services Development, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK

²Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King's College London, London, UK

³Department of Psychiatry, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK

⁴Services Psychiatriques Jura bernois, Bienne-Seeland, Bellelay, Switzerland

⁵Department of Psychiatry and Psychology, School for Mental Health and Neuroscience, Maastricht University, Maastricht, The Netherlands

⁶Centre for the Economics of Mental and Physical Health, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King's College London, London, UK

⁷Division of Primary Care and Public Health, Brighton and Sussex Medical School, Brighton, UK

⁸Centre for Primary Care and Public Health, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK

*Corresponding author

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Plain English summary

Body psychotherapy to treat negative symptoms of schizophrenia

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Symptoms of schizophrenia, such as reduced emotions and lack of drive, can reduce a person's quality of life. At present, there are few treatment options that have been found to help. Arts therapies (which involve different, more creative ways to help people communicate than just talking) may be helpful, but more evidence is needed.

One form of art therapy is body psychotherapy, which uses movement and the body as a form of treatment. In a recent small study, body psychotherapy was found to reduce symptoms, but it is not clear if it is the group activity or the therapy itself that caused the improvement, or if the improvement would still occur if the treatment was conducted at different sites by different therapists.

In this study, 275 people were randomised to take part in a 20-session body psychotherapy group or a 20-session Pilates class. Symptoms, the cost of health services used and measurements of well-being were taken before the first group session, after the last session and then again 6 months later. The measurements from the participants who were offered the body psychotherapy group were then compared with those who were offered the Pilates class.

In both groups only very small improvements in symptoms were found, which means that the body psychotherapy group did not improve symptoms more than Pilates. These findings appear to contradict the current guidelines, which suggest that art therapies may be helpful in addressing a lack of drive and reduced emotions.

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Editorial contact: nhredit@southampton.ac.uk

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