

A systematic review of the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of pharmacological and psychological interventions for the management of obsessive–compulsive disorder in children/adolescents and adults

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Plain English summary

Interventions for obsessive–compulsive disorder

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Plain English summary

Obsessive–compulsive disorder (OCD) is a medical condition that affects 1–1.5% of the general population. It can begin in childhood. Several psychological therapies and drugs have been found to reduce symptoms and increase quality of life. Few studies, however, have directly compared these treatments. The current project assessed all treatment options for this condition. It aimed to establish if available treatments work equally well, taking into account their costs. Our review included 86 studies involving a total of over 8000 patients. In adults, we found that all treatments produced better results than an inactive pill. Specific psychological therapies were also more effective than non-specific therapy. Combinations of both drugs and therapy were also more effective than an inactive pill. Behavioural therapy and cognitive therapy showed a greater effect than drugs. However, there are many uncertainties regarding this difference. In children and adolescents, specific psychological therapies had greater effects than an inactive pill. The differences with non-specific psychological treatment or drugs were smaller. We may need to take into account the costs of treatments and the long-term results to make the best treatment options available. The findings of this review generally support the previously published guidelines on the management of OCD.

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