Behavioural activation versus guided self-help for depression in adults with learning disabilities: the BeatIt RCT

Andrew Jahoda,¹* Richard Hastings,²,³ Chris Hatton,⁴ Sally-Ann Cooper,¹ Nicola McMeekin,¹ Dave Dagnan,⁴,⁵ Kim Appleton,¹ Katie Scott,¹ Lauren Fulton,¹ Robert Jones,⁶ Alex McConnachie,¹ Rachel Zhang,¹ Rosie Knight,² Dawn Knowles,⁴ Christopher Williams,¹ Andy Briggs¹ and Craig Melville¹

¹Institute of Health and Wellbeing, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK
²Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
³Centre for Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology, Department of Psychiatry, School of Clinical Sciences at Monash Health, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
⁴Department of Health Research, Faculty of Health and Medicine, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK
⁵Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Penrith, UK
⁶School of Psychology, Bangor University, Bangor, UK

*Corresponding author Andrew.Jahoda@glasgow.ac.uk

Declared competing interests of authors: Christopher Williams reports personal fees from Taylor and Francis (Abingdon, UK) and from Five Areas Ltd (Clydebank, UK) outside the submitted work and is president of the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP). Sally-Ann Cooper reports grants from the National Institute for Health Research Health Technology Assessment programme during the conduct of the study.

Published September 2018
DOI: 10.3310/hta22530
Plain English summary

The BeatIt RCT
Health Technology Assessment 2018; Vol. 22: No. 53
DOI: 10.3310/hta22530

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk
Plain English summary

Depression is as common among adults with learning disabilities as it is among the general population and is the most frequent type of mental ill health they experience. Psychological (talking) therapies are the recommended treatment for most people with depression. However, many adults with learning disabilities do not have the verbal ability to participate in talking therapies. Behavioural activation is a psychological therapy shown to be effective in treating depression. It relies less on talking, gets people with depression involved in positive activities and helps them to engage in tasks that people with depression tend to avoid. We wanted to see if a behavioural activation intervention adapted for adults with learning disabilities and depression, called BeatIt, was effective.

To achieve this, we compared BeatIt to a guided self-help therapy, StepUp. Guided self-help is an educational approach, helping people to have a better understanding of depression and the skills to cope better. Adults with a learning disability were randomly assigned to either BeatIt or StepUp. They, and their carers, were asked to rate their symptoms of depression before therapy, immediately following therapy and 12 months later.

No difference was found between BeatIt and StepUp in terms of their clinical effectiveness in treating depression. Although BeatIt was more expensive than StepUp, the cost of both interventions was small compared with the participants’ overall support costs. Although we cannot say that BeatIt was more effective than StepUp, they may be better than no treatment. However, this could be discovered only in a future study making this comparison.
Criteria for inclusion in the Health Technology Assessment journal

Reports are published in Health Technology Assessment (HTA) if (1) they have resulted from work for the HTA programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

Reviews in Health Technology Assessment are termed ‘systematic’ when the account of the search appraisal and synthesis methods (to minimise biases and random errors) would, in theory, permit the replication of the review by others.

HTA programme

The HTA programme, part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), was set up in 1993. It produces high-quality research information on the effectiveness, costs and broader impact of health technologies for those who use, manage and provide care in the NHS. ‘Health technologies’ are broadly defined as all interventions used to promote health, prevent and treat disease, and improve rehabilitation and long-term care.

The journal is indexed in NHS Evidence via its abstracts included in MEDLINE and its Technology Assessment Reports inform National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance. HTA research is also an important source of evidence for National Screening Committee (NSC) policy decisions.

For more information about the HTA programme please visit the website: http://www.nets.nihr.ac.uk/programmes/hta

This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 10/104/34. The contractual start date was in January 2013. The draft report began editorial review in March 2017 and was accepted for publication in March 2018. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

© Queen’s Printer and Controller of HMSO 2018. This work was produced by Jahoda et al. under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This issue may be freely reproduced for the purposes of private research and study and extracts (or indeed, the full report) may be included in professional journals provided that suitable acknowledgement is made and the reproduction is not associated with any form of advertising. Applications for commercial reproduction should be addressed to: NIHR Journals Library, National Institute for Health Research, Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre, Alpha House, University of Southampton Science Park, Southampton SO16 7NS, UK.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Prepress Projects Ltd, Perth, Scotland (www.prepress-projects.co.uk).
NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

Professor Tom Walley  Director, NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies and Director of the EME Programme, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editors

Professor Ken Stein  Chair of HTA and EME Editorial Board and Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

Professor André Le May  Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals)

Dr Martin Ashton-Key  Consultant in Public Health Medicine/Consultant Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Professor Matthias Beck  Professor of Management, Cork University Business School, Department of Management and Marketing, University College Cork, Ireland

Dr Tessa Crilly  Director, Crystal Blue Consulting Ltd, UK

Dr Eugenia Cronin  Senior Scientific Advisor, Wessex Institute, UK

Dr Peter Davidson  Director of the NIHR Dissemination Centre, University of Southampton, UK

Ms Tara Lamont  Scientific Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Dr Catriona McDaid  Senior Research Fellow, York Trials Unit, Department of Health Sciences, University of York, UK

Professor William McGuire  Professor of Child Health, Hull York Medical School, University of York, UK

Professor Geoffrey Meads  Professor of Wellbeing Research, University of Winchester, UK

Professor John Norrie  Chair in Medical Statistics, University of Edinburgh, UK

Professor John Powell  Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK

Professor James Raftery  Professor of Health Technology Assessment, Wessex Institute, Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, UK

Dr Rob Riemsma  Reviews Manager, Kleijnen Systematic Reviews Ltd, UK

Professor Helen Roberts  Professor of Child Health Research, UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, UK

Professor Jonathan Ross  Professor of Sexual Health and HIV, University Hospital Birmingham, UK

Professor Helen Snooks  Professor of Health Services Research, Institute of Life Science, College of Medicine, Swansea University, UK

Professor Jim Thornton  Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, UK

Professor Martin Underwood  Warwick Clinical Trials Unit, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, UK

Please visit the website for a list of editors: www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors

Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk