

# Manualised cognitive–behavioural therapy in treating depression in advanced cancer: the CanTalk RCT

Marc Serfaty,<sup>1,2\*</sup> Michael King,<sup>1,3</sup> Irwin Nazareth,<sup>3</sup> Stirling Moorey,<sup>4,5</sup> Trefor Aspden,<sup>1</sup> Adrian Tookman,<sup>6</sup> Kathryn Mannix,<sup>7</sup> Anna Gola,<sup>3,8</sup> Sarah Davis,<sup>1,7</sup> John Wood<sup>3</sup> and Louise Jones<sup>1,6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Division of Psychiatry, University College London, London, UK

<sup>2</sup>Priory Hospital North London, London, UK

<sup>3</sup>Research Department of Primary Care & Population Health, University College London, London, UK

<sup>4</sup>South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK

<sup>5</sup>Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King's College London, London, UK

<sup>6</sup>Marie Curie Hospice, Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust, London, UK

<sup>7</sup>Palliative Care Service, Newcastle upon Tyne Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

<sup>8</sup>Marie Curie Palliative Care Research Department, University College London, London, UK

\*Corresponding author [m.serfaty@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:m.serfaty@ucl.ac.uk)

**Declared competing interests of authors:** Marc Serfaty is a member of the National Institute for Health Research Health Technology Assessment General Board.

Published May 2019

DOI: 10.3310/hta23190

## Plain English summary

### The CanTalk RCT

Health Technology Assessment 2019; Vol. 23: No. 19

DOI: 10.3310/hta23190

NIHR Journals Library [www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk)

## Plain English summary

There are high rates of depression in people with advanced (cannot-be-cured) cancer. Depression worsens a person's quality of life (QoL), may become a burden for carers and may prolong a patient's hospital stay. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) challenges unhelpful thinking and ways of doing things to help improve mood. CBT is effective for treating depression, but it is unclear if it works for depression in advanced cancer patients.

Advanced cancer patients with depression were entered into a research trial to see if the addition of CBT to usual care was better at improving depressive symptoms than usual care alone. We also wished to evaluate whether or not CBT helped to save costs.

We enrolled 230 participants from hospital clinics, general practitioner (GP) surgeries and the Marie Curie Hospice, Hampstead. A computer program randomly allocated people to one of two groups: (1) CBT plus usual care or (2) usual care alone. Everyone received usual care from their GPs and oncology teams. Patients who were offered the addition of CBT received up to 12 1-hour sessions delivered through a community service called Improving Access to Psychological Therapies. We measured depression using a questionnaire called the Beck Depression Inventory, version 2 collected at the start of, and at 6, 12, 18 and 24 weeks into, the trial. We also collected other measures, including those relating to health, QoL and resource costs at various times.

Overall, there was no improvement in symptoms of low mood or cost savings with the addition of CBT to usual care compared with usual care alone. This means that CBT does not benefit people with depression and advanced cancer, and should not be routinely offered. However, those widowed, divorced or separated appeared to benefit from CBT over and above their usual care. CBT targeted to these people may be helpful and may ensure that resources are allocated in the best way.

ISSN 1366-5278 (Print)

ISSN 2046-4924 (Online)

Impact factor: 4.513

*Health Technology Assessment* is indexed in MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, The Cochrane Library and the Clarivate Analytics Science Citation Index.

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) ([www.publicationethics.org/](http://www.publicationethics.org/)).

Editorial contact: [journals.library@nhr.ac.uk](mailto:journals.library@nhr.ac.uk)

The full HTA archive is freely available to view online at [www.journalslibrary.nhr.ac.uk/hta](http://www.journalslibrary.nhr.ac.uk/hta). Print-on-demand copies can be purchased from the report pages of the NIHR Journals Library website: [www.journalslibrary.nhr.ac.uk](http://www.journalslibrary.nhr.ac.uk)

## 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.nhr.ac.uk/programmes/hta>

## This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 09/33/02. The contractual start date was in March 2012. The draft report began editorial review in May 2017 and was accepted for publication in January 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 2019. This work was produced by Serfaty *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.nhr.ac.uk](http://www.journalslibrary.nhr.ac.uk)), produced by Prepress Projects Ltd, Perth, Scotland ([www.prepress-projects.co.uk](http://www.prepress-projects.co.uk)).

## NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

**Professor Ken Stein** Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

## NIHR Journals Library Editors

**Professor John Powell** Chair of HTA and EME Editorial Board and Editor-in-Chief of HTA and EME journals. Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK, and Honorary Professor, University of Manchester, and Senior Clinical Researcher and Associate Professor, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, UK

**Professor Andrée Le May** Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals) and Editor-in-Chief of HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals

**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** Consultant Advisor, Wessex Institute, University of Southampton, UK

**Ms Tara Lamont** Director, NIHR Dissemination Centre, 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 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 Ken Stein** Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, 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](http://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors)

**Editorial contact:** [journals.library@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:journals.library@nihr.ac.uk)