

Group cognitive rehabilitation to reduce the psychological impact of multiple sclerosis on quality of life: the CRAMMS RCT

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Plain English summary

The CRAMMS RCT

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Plain English summary

Cognitive (or mental processing) problems, particularly those affecting memory and attention, are common in people with multiple sclerosis. Multiple sclerosis is a condition that affects the brain and causes nerve damage. Cognitive rehabilitation can involve:

- retraining cognitive skills, which are the core skills your brain uses to think, read, learn, remember, reason and concentrate
- teaching strategies to cope in daily life.

Cognitive rehabilitation is rarely provided for people with multiple sclerosis.

A trial was carried out to determine whether or not providing a group cognitive rehabilitation programme improved quality of life more than usual clinical care, which did not involve any cognitive rehabilitation. The effects on daily memory problems, mood, fatigue and employment were examined and also the cost-effectiveness of the treatment.

A total of 449 people with multiple sclerosis took part in the trial. They all agreed to be part of the research trial, had cognitive problems, were aged 18–69 years and could travel to attend group sessions. Participants were then allocated to receive cognitive rehabilitation or not, on the basis of chance (i.e. randomly). All participants were followed up for 1 year.

Although both groups showed no differences in quality of life after 1 year, those who received cognitive rehabilitation had fewer memory problems in daily life and reported better mood than those who received only their usual clinical care. There were no differences in their levels of fatigue or disability, or in employment status. The qualitative results indicated that participants found the intervention useful. Treatment cost slightly less than usual care but had modest benefits.

Overall, the results suggest that there may be modest short-term benefits of cognitive rehabilitation, and future studies will consider how such benefits can be maintained and whether or not some people benefit more than others.

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This report

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