



Synopsis

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for people living with motor neuron disease: the COMMEND feasibility study and randomised controlled trial

Rebecca L Gould,^{1*†} Benjamin J Thompson,^{2†} Charlotte V Rawlinson,¹
Matt Bursnall,² Mike Bradburn,² Anju D Keetharuth,³ Tracey Young,³
Vanessa Lawrence,⁴ David A White,² Robert J Howard,¹ Marc A Serfaty,^{1,5}
Lance M McCracken,⁶ Christopher D Graham,⁷ Ammar Al-Chalabi,⁸
Laura H Goldstein,⁹ Dynameni Androulaki-Koraki,⁴ Pavithra Kumar,²
Kirsty Weeks,¹ Rebecca Gossage-Worrall,² Emily J Turton,²
Simon Waterhouse,² Nicola Drewry,¹⁰ Cindy Cooper,² Pamela J Shaw¹¹
and Christopher J McDermott¹¹

¹Division of Psychiatry, University College London, London, UK

²Clinical Trials Research Unit, Sheffield Centre for Health and Related Research, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

³Sheffield Centre for Health and Related Research, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

⁴Department of Health Services & Population Research, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London, London, UK

⁵Priory Hospital North London, London, UK

⁶Department of Psychology, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

⁷Department of Psychological Sciences & Health, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK

⁸Maurice Wohl Clinical Neuroscience Institute, King's College London, London, UK

⁹Department of Psychology, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London, London, UK

¹⁰Patient and Public Involvement representative

¹¹Sheffield Institute for Translational Neuroscience, and the NIHR Sheffield Biomedical Research Centre, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

†Joint first authors

*Corresponding author r.gould@ucl.ac.uk

Published October 2025

DOI: 10.3310/JHGD7339

Volume 29 • Issue 51

Plain language summary

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for people living with motor neuron disease: the COMMEND feasibility study and randomised controlled trial

Health Technology Assessment 2025; Vol. 29: No. 51

DOI: 10.3310/JHGD7339

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain language summary

Why did we do this study?

Motor neuron disease is a progressive, fatal neurological condition that affects the nerves that control muscles. There is no cure or treatment that significantly prolongs life, and so helping people to manage their psychological health is crucial. There is little guidance on what psychological support should be provided to help people do this. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is a psychological therapy that has been shown to improve psychological health in other long-term health conditions. Therefore, we wanted to know whether it is helpful for people with motor neuron disease.

What did we do?

We asked different groups of people what psychological therapies for people with motor neuron disease should look like. We used these findings to develop Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for people with motor neuron disease and tested how acceptable it was to them. We then tested it out in a clinical trial. 191 people with motor neuron disease joined the trial between September 2019 and August 2022. Roughly, half were offered Acceptance and Commitment Therapy plus standard care, while the others just had standard care. We asked people about their quality of life, mood and functioning at the start and after 6 and 9 months. We also measured how much Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and standard care cost.

What did we find?

Just under two-thirds of those who received Acceptance and Commitment Therapy plus standard care had a quality of life that stayed the same or got better over 6 months compared to just over one-third of those who just had standard care. A similar result was found at 9 months. However, it was not clear that the benefit of receiving Acceptance and Commitment Therapy was worth the extra cost of providing it. This might have been due to the fact that the tool used to measure value for money focuses more on physical health than psychological health or that the number of participants was not large enough to examine this.

What does this mean?

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is helpful for maintaining or improving psychological health in people with motor neuron disease. However, further work is needed to see whether this benefit is worth the additional cost.