

Largest clinical trial aimed at aiding children with depression

May 10 2017

A recent study by BU Associate Professor of Psychological & Brain Sciences, Martha Tompson, analyzed Family Focused Treatment for Children with Depression (FFT-CD) in the largest clinical trial ever to examine a non-medication treatment for children with depressive disorders. FFT-CD focuses on integrating not only the child, but also the entire family into the treatment plan in an effort to help families develop skills to enhance coping and emotional regulation, foster positive parent-child interactions, and cultivate techniques to help promote positive reinforcement and communication within the family.

The study, a collaborative effort between Tompson's lab at BU and her colleague Joan R. Asarnow at UCLA, compared immediate post-[treatment](#) effects of FFT-CD against the effects of individual supportive psychotherapy (IP) in children aged 7 to 14 with depressive disorders. In order to gauge the effectiveness of FFT-CD, the 134 youths involved in the study were randomly assigned to receive 15 sessions of either IP or FFT-CD over a four-month period.

While at the conclusion of the four-month period both groups were satisfied with their interventions and showed reductions in depressive symptom scores, the FFT-CD group had higher rates of recovery. The results showed a higher rate of clinical depression response for the children in the FFT-CD group (77.7%) than the children in the IP group (59.9%), and families in the FFT-CD group felt as though they had greater knowledge and skills for managing depression compared with those families in the IP [group](#).

This recent study is of great importance to the psychological community, as few studies have examined the psychosocial treatment for depression in [children](#) in this manner. "Overall, our findings emphasize the value of psychological interventions in the treatment of depressive disorders in childhood," Tompson and colleagues concluded.

Provided by Boston University

Citation: Largest clinical trial aimed at aiding children with depression (2017, May 10) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

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