

Online therapy helped cardiovascular disease patients with depression

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Credit: David Einar

Researchers at Linköping University have developed a treatment for depression among people with cardiovascular disease. The results, recently published in *JMIR Mental Health*, show that cardiovascular

disease patients who underwent internet-based therapy for their depression became less depressed and gained a better quality of life.

It is common that [cardiovascular disease](#) (CVD) patients suffer from depression. This can lead to a vicious circle where the CVD can be affected negatively, and for this reason it's important that the depression is treated.

"Our study shows that internet-based therapy can reduce depression and improve quality of life among CVD patients. Because of insufficient resources, all CVD patients don't get the required care against depression, and so internet-based therapy can play an important role. Also, the patients can undergo therapy at home, at a time that suits them," says Peter Johansson, professor at the Department of Social and Welfare Studies at Linköping University.

A number of previous studies have shown that internet-based [cognitive behavioural therapy](#) is effective against depression, but this study is the first to be designed specifically for CVD patients with depression. It was a [randomised controlled trial](#), where the participants were randomly put into different groups, to enable comparison with each other. The participants included 144 CVD patients with depression. Of these, 72 underwent nine weeks of internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy, and during this time had access to a nurse. The remaining 72 discussed health with each other in an internet forum, for the same period of time.

The results show that after nine weeks of online therapy, one of five patients had a significant clinical improvement in their [depression](#), compared to the group in the internet forum. Also, after the completed treatment, the online-[therapy](#) patients reported an increase in quality of life.

"The strength of our study is that the patients had access to nurses via the

web—a contact that was crucial to the good result," says Peter Johansson.

The patients who underwent online CBT had an average of 15 minutes of feedback time every week with one of the nurses; this was not available to the patients in the online forum. The feedback time enabled the patients to get answers to their questions, but was also aimed at supporting and encouraging them.

More information: Peter Johansson et al, An Internet-Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Program Adapted to Patients With Cardiovascular Disease and Depression: Randomized Controlled Trial, *JMIR Mental Health* (2019). DOI: [10.2196/14648](https://doi.org/10.2196/14648)

Provided by Linköping University

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