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Therapy can reduce tics and Tourette syndrome

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At a time when doctors reach for drugs as a first line of treatment for psychological disorders ranging from attention hyperactivity/deficit disorder (ADHD) to bipolar disorder, a review of the reported research indicates that behavioral programs and procedures can effectively reduce the symptoms of tic disorders.

Published in the journal Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, the review reports that psychosocial treatments that rely heavily on behavioral procedures effectively reduces tics in people suffering from chronic tic disorders.

Generally, administering psychoactive drugs is considered the first viable option to treat tics. However, medications may have limited effectiveness, unwanted side effects, and poor adherence.

This review uses stringent evidence-based criteria as a way of systematically evaluating the effectiveness of psychosocial treatments designed to reduce tics. Habit-reversal training (HRT) emphasizes sensitivity to tic sensations and replaces the tic behavior with a more appropriate competing response. Exposure and response prevention, other forms of treatment, focus on the process of habituation. Both behavioral methods meet evidence-based standards as successful psychosocial treatments to reduce tics.

“Despite the common view that psychopharmacological treatments are the only effective treatments to reduce tics, the results from our research

suggest that psychosocial treatments are viable alternatives to solely administering psychoactive drugs" the authors note.

Source: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

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