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Chronic fatigue patients benefit from cognitive behavior therapy

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Cognitive behaviour therapy is effective in treating the symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome, according to a recent systematic review carried out by Cochrane Researchers.

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is a potentially long-lasting illness that can cause considerable distress and disability. Some estimates suggest it may affect as many as 1 in 100 of the population globally. There is no widely accepted explanation for the disease and patients are currently offered a variety of different treatments.

Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) uses psychological techniques to balance negative thoughts that may impair recovery with more realistic alternatives. In treating CFS, these techniques are combined with a gradual increase in activity levels.

The researchers looked at data from 15 studies involving a total of 1,043 patients with CFS. The studies compared the effects of CBT with those of usual care and other psychological therapies and suggest that in both cases CBT is more effective at reducing the severity of symptoms, provided patients persist with treatment.

Further research is required to determine whether CBT is more beneficial than other forms of treatment, such as exercise and relaxation therapies. The researchers also suggest that CBT could be more effective if used as part of a combination treatment approach.

"CFS is a challenging illness for patients, and there is ongoing controversy about its causes. There remain unanswered questions, but the available evidence is clear – CBT can help many people with CFS", says lead researcher Jonathan Price, who works at the University of Oxford in the UK.

Source: Wiley

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