

Self-help is a key component of inpatients psychotherapy

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A randomized controlled trial published in the current issue of *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* discloses new insights into the role of self-help in inpatient psychotherapy. Depression is one of the most frequent and costly mental disorders. While there is increasing evidence for the efficacy of online self-help to improve depression or prevent relapse, there is little evidence in blended care settings, especially combined with inpatient face-to-face psychotherapy.

In this study, Authors evaluated whether an evidence-based online self-help program improves the efficacy of inpatient psychotherapy. A total of 229 depressed patients were randomly allocated either to an online self-help program (intervention group [IG]; Deprexis) or an active control group (CG; weekly online information on depression) in addition to inpatient psychodynamic psychotherapy. Both groups had access to their respective experimental intervention for 12 weeks, regardless of inpatient treatment duration. Reduction of depressive symptoms, as measured with the Beck Depression Inventory-II, was the primary outcome at the end of the intervention.

Results showed that [depressive symptoms](#) were statistically significantly lower in the IG compared to the active CG at the end of treatment with a moderate between-group effect size of $d = 0.44$. The same applied to anxiety ($d = 0.33$), quality of life ($d = 0.34$), and self-esteem ($d = 0.38$) at discharge from inpatient treatment. No statistically significant differences were found regarding dysfunctional attitudes ($d = 0.14$) and work ability ($d = 0.08$) at the beginning of the trial.

This is the first evidence for blended treatment combining online self-help with inpatient psychotherapy. The study opens new and promising avenues for increasing the efficacy of inpatient [psychotherapy](#). Future studies should determine how integration of online self-help into

the therapeutic process can be developed further.

More information: Rüdiger Zwerenz et al. Online Self-Help as an Add-On to Inpatient Psychotherapy: Efficacy of a New Blended Treatment Approach, *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* (2017). [DOI: 10.1159/000481177](https://doi.org/10.1159/000481177)

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