Research into the efficacy of EMDR

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

EMDR has been well established as an effective treatment for PTSD. A recent survey of 38 randomised clinical trials (RCT) established that EMDR and Trauma Focussed Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (TFCBT) are the two most effective treatments for this disorder [1].

A review of the efficacy of EMDR for children with PTSD (7 studies) showed EMDR and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) to be superior to all other treatments. EMDR was found to be slightly more effective when compared directly with CBT [2].

The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies current treatment guidelines have designated EMDR as an effective and empirically supported treatment for PTSD, and has given an “A” rating for adult PTSD [3]. The American Psychiatric Association Practice Guideline has stated that EMDR is one of the three recommended first-line treatments for trauma [4]. In the UK, EMDR is one of the two recommended treatments for PTSD in the guidelines of the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) [5].

Other disorders

Research into EMDR with other disorders is at an earlier stage of development.

There are published RCTs showing the effectiveness of EMDR with survivors of sexual abuse [6]. One study showed EMDR to be significantly more efficient, using approximately half the number of sessions to achieve results as compared with CBT [7].

In another RTC, EMDR resulted in large and significant reductions of memory-related distress, and problem behaviours in boys with conduct problems [8].

Many other studies have been published regarding the efficacy of EMDR for other disorders in non-randomised studies. These include:

- **Depression.** Generally the study of the reduction of depressive symptoms using EMDR has been a secondary measure in post traumatic stress studies many of which have shown reductions of depression with EMDR. Some studies have specifically shown EMDR as an effective treatment for depression [9] [10].
- **Borderline Personality Disorder** [11]
- **Body Dysmorphic Disorder** [12]
- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder** [13]
- **Pain Management** [14]
- **Paedophilia** [15]
- **Phantom Limb Pain** [16] [17] [18]
- **Bulimia Nervosa** [19]
- **Phobia** [20]
- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** [21]

Further information

More details about research into EMDR can be found as follows:

EMDR Institute:  www.emdr.com/efficacy.htm
Francine Shapiro Library:  www.emdr.nku.edu
References


Robin Logie
EMDR Association UK & Ireland
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