



Title: The Efficiency of Long-term Psychotherapy

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Aim:

To review the current state of knowledge with regard to the efficacy, effectiveness, and efficiency of long-term psychotherapy.

Results and Conclusions:

- Efficacy of short-term psychotherapy has been demonstrated, however, long-term studies are scarce.
- Differences occur between efficacy and effectiveness of psychotherapy because in some cases the studied effects are of limited clinical significance, circumstances in practice may be different from the research setting, and comorbidity is found more often in the clinical situation.
- The cost-effectiveness of (long-term and short-term) psychotherapy is largely unknown. It appears that cost savings are considerable if hospitalization can be avoided.
- Psychotherapy in the Netherlands customarily involves more than 20 sessions. In view of the lack of evidence on efficiency, restraint needs to be exercised in administering such therapy.

Recommendations:

- Research is needed on the cost-effectiveness of long-term psychotherapy of patients with chronic relapsing depressions and personality disorders (especially the borderline type).
- Guidelines should contain criteria for determining the duration and frequency of psychotherapeutic treatments.
- A (national) monitoring system should be developed and implemented to assess the progress, efficacy, and quality of long-term psychotherapy.

Methods:

Systematic review of published scientific literature. Expert Committee. Peer review of draft report.

Further research/reviews required:

Research should be carried out to obtain more insight into the efficiency of psychotherapy, the effects of 'maintenance' therapy, and the degree of patient satisfaction.