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Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2003, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD002982.
DOI: [10.1002/14651858.CD002982.pub2](https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD002982.pub2).

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[Intervention Review]

Psychotherapeutic interventions for adults with asthma

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Editorial group: Cochrane Airways Group.

Publication status and date: Unchanged, published in Issue 4, 2005.

Citation: Fleming SL, Pagliari C, Churchill RCC, McKean M, Shuldham C. Psychotherapeutic interventions for adults with asthma. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2003, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD002982. DOI: [10.1002/14651858.CD002982.pub2](https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD002982.pub2).

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ABSTRACT

Background

Many people have asthma, and for some their symptoms may be triggered by psychological factors. In addition compliance with medical therapy may have a psychological dimension. Therefore, psychological interventions aim to reduce the burden of symptoms and improve management of the disease.

Objectives

To assess the effectiveness of psychological interventions for adults with asthma.

Search methods

The Cochrane Airways Group specialised register and PsycINFO were searched with pre-defined terms until September 2003.

Selection criteria

Randomised controlled trials published in any language assessing the effects of a psychological intervention compared with a form of control in adult participants were included in the review.

Data collection and analysis

Two reviewers assessed the relevance of abstracts identified by electronic searching and retrieved agreed studies for further scrutiny. The studies that met the inclusion criteria were assembled and data extracted.

Main results

Twelve studies were included in the review, however study quality was poor and sample sizes were frequently small. No meta-analysis could be performed due to the diversity of interventions and the outcomes assessed. Findings between studies were conflicting. This may have been due to the different types of interventions used and the deficiencies in trial design.

Authors' conclusions

This review was unable to draw firm conclusions for the role of psychological interventions in asthma due to the absence of an adequate evidence base. Large, well-conducted and reported randomised trials are required in this area, in order to determine the effects of these techniques in the treatment of asthma in adults.

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

There is not enough evidence to determine whether psychological interventions for adults with asthma help to improve symptoms and mental health; more research is required.

It is thought by some that psychological interventions can help people with asthma. Systematically, we searched the literature on psychological interventions to find valid studies that looked at the effects of providing mainly psychological interventions for adults with asthma. The studies found examined many different therapies and measured different physical and psychological outcomes; for these reasons, their results could not be easily combined. Furthermore, the available studies were completed with small numbers of people and the way the studies were conducted could be improved. More research with large numbers of people and improved design needs to be done before it is known whether psychological interventions are effective in making adults with asthma feel better.