

## **A Multidimensional Meta-Analysis of Treatments for Depression, Panic, and Generalised Anxiety Disorder: An Empirical Examination of the Status of Empirically Supported Therapies**

DREW WESTEN and KATE MORRISON

### **Abstract**

The authors report a meta-analysis of high-quality studies published from 1990-1998 on the efficacy of manualised psychotherapies for depression, panic disorder, and generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) that bear on the clinical utility and external validity of empirically supported therapies. The results suggest that a substantial proportion of patients with panic improve and remain improved; that treatments for depression and GAD produce impressive short-term effects; that most patients in treatment for depression and GAD do not improve and remain improved at clinically meaningful follow-up intervals; and that screening procedures used in many studies raise questions about generalisability, particularly in light of a systematic relation across studies between exclusion rates and outcome. The data suggest the importance of reporting, in both clinical trials and meta-analyses, a range of outcome indices that provide a more comprehensive, multidimensional portrait of treatment effects and their generalisability. These include exclusion rates, percent improvement, percent recovered, percent who *remained* improved or recovered at follow-up, percent seeking additional treatment at follow-up, and data on both completer and intent-to-treat samples.

*BMJ 1997; 315:672-675*

### **How to read a paper: Papers that summarise other papers (systematic reviews and meta-analyses)**

TRISHA GREENHALGH

### **Abstract**

Remember the essays you used to write as a student? You would browse through the indexes of books and journals until you came across a paragraph that looked relevant, and copied it out. If anything you found did not fit in with the theory you were proposing you left it out. This, more or less, constitutes the methodology of the journalistic review – an overview of primary studies which have not been identified or analysed in a systematic (standardised and objective) way.

In contrast, a systematic review is an overview of primary studies which contains an explicit statement of objectives, materials, and methods and has been conducted according to explicit and reproducible methodology.