

## LONG-TERM EFFECTIVENESS OF LONG- AND SHORT-TERM PSYCHOTHERAPY IN THE TREATMENT OF DEPRESSIVE AND ANXIETY DISORDERS

*P. Knekt, T. Jääskeläinen, E. Virtala, T. Härkänen, M. Laaksonen, O. Lindfors*

National Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland

**Introduction:** Little is known about long-term effects of psychotherapy on depressive or anxiety disorders.

**Aims:** To compare the effectiveness of three psychotherapies of different length in a clinical trial with a 5-year follow-up.

**Methods:** In the Helsinki Psychotherapy Study, 326 outpatients with mood or anxiety disorder were randomly assigned to long-term psychodynamic psychotherapy (LPP), short-term psychodynamic psychotherapy (SPP), and solution-focused therapy (SFT), and were followed up for 5 years from start of treatment. Depressive, anxiety and general psychiatric symptoms (BDI, SCL-90-Anx, and SCL-90-GSI), working ability (WAI), and recovery (based on changes in psychiatric symptoms and use of auxiliary treatment) were used as outcome measures.

**Results:** For patients with depressive disorder LPP was more effective than SPP or SFT in reducing symptoms, improving work ability and leading to recovery during the 3 last years of follow-up. For patients with anxiety disorder effectiveness of LPP was less pronounced with no differences between short-term and long-term therapy in recovery from anxiety symptoms. No differences were found between the effectiveness of the short-term therapies.

**Conclusions:** Long-term psychotherapy is more effective than short-term therapy during a long follow-up especially in the treatment of depressive disorder. More research especially considering different anxiety disorders is still needed.