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Title page

Homeopathy in the treatment of depression: a systematic review

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Depression is a common reason for patients to consult homeopaths. This review aims to assess the efficacy, effectiveness and safety of homeopathy in depression.

Methods: Thirty databases/sources used to identify studies reporting on homeopathy in depression, published between 1982 and 2016. Studies were assessed for their risk of bias, model validity, aspect of homeopathy and comparator.

Results: Eighteen studies assessing homeopathy in depression were identified. Two double-blind placebo-controlled trials of homeopathic medicinal products (HMPs) for depression were identified. The first trial (N=91) with high risk of bias found HMPs were non-inferior to fluoxetine at 4 (p=0.654) and 8 weeks (p=0.965); whereas the second trial (N=133), with low risk of bias, found HMPs was comparable to fluoxetine (p=0.082) and superior to placebo (p<0.005) at 6 weeks. The remaining research had unclear/high risk of bias. A non-placebo-controlled RCT found standardised treatment by homeopaths comparable to fluvoxamine; a cohort study of patients receiving treatment provided by GPs practising homeopathy reported significantly lower consumption of psychotropic drugs and improved depression; and patient-reported outcomes showed at least moderate improvement in 10 of 12 uncontrolled studies. Fourteen titles provided safety data. All adverse events were mild or moderate, and transient. No evidence suggested treatment was unsafe.

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