

# Is group therapy the way to overcome chronic fatigue?

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A randomized controlled trial published in the current issue of *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* analyzes the effectiveness of group therapy in chronic fatigue.

Meta-analyses have been inconclusive about the efficacy of [cognitive behavior](#) therapies (CBTs) delivered in groups of patients with [chronic fatigue](#) syndrome (CFS) due to a lack of adequate studies. The Authors conducted a pragmatic [randomized controlled trial](#) with 204 adult CFS patients from our routine clinical practice who were willing to receive [group therapy](#).

Patients were equally allocated to therapy groups of 8 patients and 2 therapists, 4 patients and 1 therapist or a waiting list control condition. Primary analysis was based on the intention-to-treat principle and compared the intervention group (n = 136) with the waiting list condition (n = 68). The study was open label. Thirty-four (17%) patients were lost to follow-up during the course of the trial. Missing data were imputed using mean proportions of improvement based on the outcome scores of similar patients with a second assessment. Large and significant improvement in favor of the intervention group was found on fatigue severity (effect size = 1.1) and overall impairment (effect size = 0.9) at the second assessment. Physical functioning and psychological distress improved moderately (effect size = 0.5).

Treatment effects remained significant in sensitivity and per-protocol analyses. Subgroup analysis revealed that the effects of the intervention

also remained significant when both group sizes (i.e. 4 and 8 patients) were compared separately with the waiting list condition. CBT can be effectively delivered in groups of CFS patients. Group size does not seem to affect the general efficacy of the intervention which is of importance for settings in which large treatment groups are not feasible due to limited referral.

**More information:** Jan F. Wiborg et al. Randomised Controlled Trial of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Delivered in Groups of Patients with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* (2015). [DOI: 10.1159/000438867](https://doi.org/10.1159/000438867)

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