

# Interpersonal psychotherapy helps depressed women with histories of sexual trauma

4 October 2018, by Patti Verbanas

Women sexually abused in childhood and adolescence who suffer from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder benefit significantly from Interpersonal Psychotherapy-Trauma, according to a Rutgers researcher.

The study appears in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*.

In the study, researchers compared the results of treating depressed [women](#) with sexual abuse histories with either Interpersonal Psychotherapy-Trauma or traditional clinic psychotherapy. Interpersonal Psychotherapy is a time-limited therapy that focuses on reducing psychological distress by resolving interpersonal conflicts and strengthening social relationships. Such women constitute more than 20 percent of female patients in publicly funded community mental health centers.

The study, which included 162 women, found that Interpersonal Psychotherapy-Trauma reduced symptoms of depression and [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) and improved social health when clinicians followed up 8 and 20 months later.

Paul Duberstein, professor at Rutgers School of Public Health, conducted the study while at the University of Rochester with Rochester professor Nancy Talbot.

Sexual abuse is all too common, affects girls and boys and is typically shrouded in secrecy. In the study, one in five women seeking treatment in the community mental health center had a [history of sexual abuse](#) before age 18, with some as young as five. The therapy was modified for women who had histories of trauma, few social resources and who faced stigma for seeking mental health care.

"We need to make sure that community mental health centers are aware of these therapies, especially for the disenfranchised and those living in poverty," Duberstein said. "The good news is that Interpersonal Psychotherapy-Trauma can easily be integrated into community mental [health](#) clinics by training the existing clinical staff."

**More information:** Paul R. Duberstein et al. Effectiveness of interpersonal psychotherapy-trauma for depressed women with childhood abuse histories., *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1037/ccp0000335](https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000335)

Provided by Rutgers University

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