

# This Week's Citation Classic

Klerman G L, DiMascio A, Weissman M, Prusoff B & Paykel E S. Treatment of depression by drugs and psychotherapy. *Amer. J. Psychiat.* 131:186-91, 1974.  
 [Dept. Psychiat., Harvard Med. Sch., Dept. Mental Health, Commonwealth of Mass., Boston, MA; Dept. Psychiat., Yale Med. Sch., New Haven, CT; and St. George's Hosp., London, England]

The comparative efficacy of drugs and psychotherapy alone and in combination were compared in a randomized controlled trial using a 3 by 2 factorial design. The six treatment cells were psychotherapy alone, amitriptyline alone, amitriptyline plus psychotherapy, psychotherapy plus placebo, placebo alone, and low contact, no pill. The patients entered the study after having improved with open treatments with amitriptyline with an acute episode of depression. All patients were ambulatory females, non-psychotic and non-bipolar. Drug treatment prevented return of symptoms and relapse. Psychotherapy improved social functioning and interpersonal relations. The two treatments were additive. There was no placebo effect. [The Science Citation Index® (SCI®) and the Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI®) indicate that this paper has been cited in over 165 publications since 1974.]

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"During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the field of psychopharmacology expanded greatly and the randomized controlled trial became accepted as the standard technique for evaluating new drugs. Only slowly had this technique diffused into modes of evaluating other treatments in psychiatry, particularly psychotherapy. Based on early experience, mainly with drug treatment, when I moved to Yale University in 1964 I became interested in exploring the relationship between pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy, both in comparison with each other

and in combination. Our research group at that time included Eugene Paykel, now at the University of London, St. George's Hospital; Myrna Weissman, now at Yale; Alberto DiMascio, since deceased; and Brig Prusoff, now at Yale. We designed a randomized trial comparing the efficacy of drugs alone, psychotherapy alone, the combination, and a controlled group in the maintenance treatment of depressives who had recovered from an acute episode and who were followed for nine months. This was part of a series of similar studies sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), including a comparison of drug and group therapy undertaken at Johns Hopkins University,<sup>1</sup> and Friedman<sup>2</sup> et al. on marital therapy and medication in the Philadelphia Psychiatric Center, Pennsylvania.

"The field of psychotherapy research has gained continuing prominence. The interpersonal form of psychotherapy which was first described in its developmental stages in the 1974 paper has been subsequently modified and a manual has been developed and further control trials have been undertaken.<sup>3,4</sup> Along with cognitive therapy, interpersonal therapy is being evaluated in a large, multicenter collaborative study of the psychotherapy of depression being sponsored by NIMH. There are at least 15 controlled studies of brief therapy for depression now recorded and many more are under way.

"In our opinion, this paper has been highly cited because its appearance involved a happy confluence of the methodology of the randomized controlled clinical trial, interest in maintenance therapy of depressives treated with medication, and a growing interest in the efficacy of short-term forms of psychotherapy for depression."

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- Klerman G L & Weissman M M. Interpersonal psychotherapy: theory and research. (Rush J, ed.) *Short-term psychotherapies for depression*. New York: Guilford Press, 1982. p. 88-104.
- Klerman G L, Weissman M M, Rounseville B J & Chevron E. *Short-term interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) for depression*. New York: Basic Books. To be published, 1984.