



## CLINICAL NEWSLETTER

CHRONIC ILLNESS AND EMDR THERAPY | VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4

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This is a monthly e-newsletter created primarily for EMDR researchers and trained clinicians. The purpose of it is to promote continued dialogue regarding the efficacy and current developments with EMDR therapy and its use with a variety of populations.

This month we are sharing with you current research focused on the chronic illness and EMDR therapy. We are hoping you find it useful and informative.

As the EMDR Research Foundation Board of Directors works to create more research opportunities for our community, we hope you join the conversation with your suggestions for upcoming newsletters.

Sincerely,  
*Wendy J. Freitag, Ph.D.*  
**EMDR Research Foundation**

## Chronic Illness: Improving Quality of Life with EMDR Therapy

Dealing with a chronic illness can have a significant impact on the emotional health of both individuals and their families. In an article published in the *Western Journal of Medicine*, ([Emotional dimensions of chronic disease](#), Turner and Kelly, 2000) the authors suggested that:

- The emotional dimensions of chronic conditions are often overlooked when medical care is considered.
- It can be difficult to diagnose depression in the medically ill but diagnosis and treatment are essential.
- Doctors may be well equipped for the biomedical aspects of care but not for the challenges of understanding the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of illness and health.
- Clinicians can play an important part in helping their patients to maintain healthy coping skills.
- Clinicians should reflect on the emotional dimensions of their work, including how professional development and training may enhance professional satisfaction and patient care, and the important role that relationships and outside activities have in providing balance.

They add: "Patients with chronic conditions often have to adjust their aspirations, lifestyle, and employment. Many grieve about their predicament before adjusting to it. But others have protracted distress and may develop psychiatric disorders, most commonly depression or anxiety. A prospective study of general medical admissions found that 13% of men and 17% of women had

an affective disorder.

- The proportion of patients with conditions such as diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis who have an affective disorder is between 20% and 25%.
- Among patients admitted to the hospital for acute care and among patients with cancer, rates can exceed 30% compared with a prevalence of depression in the community of about 4%-8%."

As mental health clinicians, we see the impact of chronic illness on a daily basis in our office. As EMDR therapy clinicians, we wonder what the data have to offer regarding appropriate treatment.

The following authors did a study on the Efficacy of Eye Movements Desensitization and Reprocessing on the Quality of Life of the Patients with Myocardial Infarctions: Tahmineh Salehian, Saidzaker Saeedinejad, Mohammad Behnammoghadam, Mohsen Shafiee, Sima Mohammadhossini, Zargham Behnammoghadam, Aziz Behnammoghadam, Soheil Ebrahimpour & Akvan Paymard.

Myocardial infarction causes limitations in the physical activity and perturbation of quality of life. The aim of this study was to evaluate the effect of eye movements desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) on the quality of life of these patients. This study was conducted in two groups as the before and after while the effect of eye movements desensitization and reprocessing on the quality of life of the patients with Myocardial infarction. Sampling was done based on the purposive sampling. Patients were randomly divided into two experimental and control groups (30 patients in each group). Samples were assigned through randomized allocation. In the experimental group, the EMDR method was carried out on the patients in five 90-minute sessions over a two week period. In the control group no intervention was received. Data of Quality of life, pre-treatment, post-treatment were analyzed using SPSS. The results showed that the quality of life increase in all its dimensions of the experimental group, after performing the EMDR therapy significantly ( $P=0.001$ ). Treatment what has already been stated, was effective on the quality of life in patients. Treatment team members can use this method as an effective intervention in order to improve the quality of life of their patients.

In another study, Sara Carletto, Martina Borghi, Gabriella Bertino , Francesco Oliva, Marco Cavallo, Arne Hofmann, Alessandro Zennaro, Simona Malucchi and Luca Ostacoli<sup>1</sup> reported the results of their study: Treating Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Patients with Multiple Sclerosis: A Randomized Controlled Trial Comparing the Efficacy of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing and Relaxation Therapy.

In their summary, they reported:

**Objective:** Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a demyelinating autoimmune disease that imposes a significant emotional burden with heavy psychosocial consequences. Several studies have investigated the association between MS and mental disorders such as depression and anxiety, and recently researchers have focused also on Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is the first study that investigates the usefulness of proposing a treatment for PTSD to patients with MS.

**Methods:** A randomized controlled trial with patients with MS diagnosed with PTSD comparing Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR;  $n = 20$ ) and Relaxation Therapy (RT;  $n = 22$ ). The primary outcome measure was the proportion of participants that no longer meet PTSD diagnosis as measured with Clinician Administered PTSD Scale 6-months after the treatment.

**Results:** The majority of patients were able to overcome their PTSD diagnosis after only 10 therapy sessions. EMDR treatment appears to be more effective than RT in reducing the proportion of patients with MS suffering from PTSD. Both treatments are effective in reducing PTSD severity, anxiety and depression symptoms, and to improve Quality of Life.

**Conclusion:** Although our results can only be considered preliminary, this study suggests that it is essential that PTSD symptoms are detected and that brief and cost-effective interventions to reduce PTSD and associated psychological symptoms are offered to patients, in order to help them to reduce the psychological burden associated with their neurological condition.

Although neither of these studies fully answer the question, they approach it with systematic research as a step in formulating answers. With RCT's we can increase knowledge, and our capacity to be healers for our clients.

It is also a call to physicians as healers to consider recommending mental health treatment as part of the arsenal in caring for their patients with chronic illnesses.

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## Mentor Books Partnership

Mentor Books, a bookstore that specializes in psychology and integrative health care, has partnered with the EMDR Research Foundation and Trauma Recovery/EMDR HAP to initiate a donation program at upcoming National Conferences. Heidi Sammons, EMDR therapist and owner of Mentor Books believes EMDR therapy will lead the way in the future of psychotherapies and is why she developed this program. We invite you to donate \$1 per books purchased at upcoming conferences to support this program.



**Contact:** Heidi Sammons - [heidi@mentorbooks.com](mailto:heidi@mentorbooks.com) or [www.mentorbooks.com](http://www.mentorbooks.com)

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