

## **ISTDP Research 1: The Trial Therapy**

Allan Abbass September 2018

For email updates on research click here:

<http://reachingthroughresistance.com/sign-up-to-receive-emails/>

Following are abstracts of 5 outcome studies of the Trial Therapy. All the studies point to benefits of the interview. The first study was all my trial therapies and the second was compared to standard intake interviews I had done. The third was an EDT trial therapy and can be considered a replication on the first study. The 4<sup>th</sup> is a large sample study with many different therapists overcoming the issue of one expert doing the interview: it found outcomes in the trial related to status of unlocking, a very interesting finding. Finally, a large subset of these cases were analyzed separately and found to show large measurable reductions in health care costs in long follow-up.

*The trial therapy should be considered for wide utilization because it is a therapeutic assessment, is effective when used by a range of professionals and is also cost effective.*

### **A Naturalistic Study of Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy Trial Therapy Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention 8:164–170 (2008) Abbass A, Joffres M, Ogrodniczuk J**

The objective is to study the effectiveness of Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP) trial therapies. In a tertiary psychotherapy service, Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (IIP) medication use, and need for further treatment were evaluated before versus 1-month post trial therapy in a sequential series of 30 clients. Trial therapies were interviews with active focus on emotions and how they are experienced. The interviews resulted in statistically significant improvements on all BSI subscales and one of the IIP subscales. One-third of clients required no further treatment, seven stopped medications, and two returned to work following trial therapy. The ISTDP trial therapy appeared to be clinically effective and cost effective. Future research directions are discussed.

### **Intensive Short-term Dynamic Psychotherapy Trials of Therapy: Qualitative Description and Comparison to Standard Intake Assessments, AD HOC Bulletin of STDP, April 2009, page 6-13 Allan A. Abbass, MD, Michel Joffres, MD, John Ogrodniczuk, PhD**

**Objective:** To compare Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP) trial therapy consultations to standard intake interviews. **Design:** Non-randomized clinical trial design. **Methods:** Thirty sequential ISTDP trial therapies were compared to 20 traditional intake assessment interviews using blind ratings of videotape samples. Brief Symptom Inventory and Inventory of Interpersonal Problems scores were compared pre and post interview. Need for follow-up treatment, medication use and work functioning were also compared between groups. **Results:** Trial therapies were clearly distinguishable from standard intake assessments. The trial therapy resulted in statistically significant improvements on all BSI subscales. In the

follow-up interview, one third (10) of individuals in the trial therapy group required no further treatment, 7 were able to stop 11 psychotropic medications, and 2 were able to return to work. **Conclusions:** ISTDP trial therapy appears to be a distinct therapeutic assessment procedure that results in superior benefits compared to traditional intake assessments. Confirmation of these findings will require a randomized trial.

**Experiential Dynamic Therapy: A Preliminary Investigation Into the Effectiveness and Process of the Extended Initial Session** *J. Clin. Psychol.* 00:1–10, 2014. Aafjes-van Doorn K, Macdonald J, Stein M, Cooper A, Tucker S

**Objective:** This study explored whether patients in specialist psychology services made early gains on theoretically relevant therapeutic processes and outcomes after a trial therapy session (one 2- to 3-hour initial Experiential Dynamic Therapy session). **Method:** This practice-based, nonrandomized trial used a pre–post design. Thirty-one patients (23 women, average age of 37) completed standardized measures of symptoms of general distress, interpersonal functioning, self-compassion, and remoralization before and after the trial therapy session. Video recordings of the sessions' therapy process were rated on the Achievement of Therapeutic Objectives Scale. **Results:** After the trial therapy session, patients reported a significant increase in remoralization and self-compassion and a significant decrease in symptoms of general distress but not interpersonal problems. Process ratings were not significantly associated with improvement on these outcome measures. **Conclusions:** This initial positive effect could be due to the session or an effect of time or placebo. Future research using active control conditions is warranted.

**Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy Trial Therapy Effectiveness and Role of “Unlocking the Unconscious”** *J Nerv Ment Dis* 2017;205: 453–457 Allan Abbass, MD, FRCPC, Joel Town, DCLinPsy, John Ogrodniczuk, PhD, Michel Joffres, MD, PhD, and Peter Lilliengren, PhD

**Abstract:** This study examined the effects of trial therapy interviews using intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy with 500 mixed sample, tertiary center patients. Furthermore, we investigated whether the effect of trial therapy was larger for patients who had a major unlocking of the unconscious during the interview compared with those who did not. Outcome measures were the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) and the Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (IIP), measured at baseline and at 1-month follow-up. Significant outcome effects were observed for both the BSI and the IIP with small to moderate preeffect/posteffect sizes, Cohen's  $d = 0.52$  and  $0.23$ , respectively. Treatment effects were greater in patients who had a major unlocking of the unconscious compared with those who did not. The trial therapy interview appears to be beneficial, and its effects may relate to certain therapeutic processes. Further controlled research is warranted.

**Cost-Effectiveness of Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy Trial Therapy**

## **Abbass A, Kisely S, Town J 2018 Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics**

### **Main Methods:**

We included 344 patients, of whom 63.7% were female, 77.4% were aged 25–60 years, and 78.9% were from the urban area of Halifax (NS, Canada). They were provided trial therapy by 10 different therapists who were experienced in the ISTDP model. The interviews themselves cost an average of approximately CAD 187 each. The interviews were considered overall to be adherent to the model with ratings of 3.3 (standard deviation, SD 0.8) on a 4-point scale. Patients' symptoms reflected a range of complexity with 83 subjects having fragile character structure with dissociative features, 91 having high resistance, 60 having moderate resistance, and only 5 having low resistance, based on therapist ratings of psychodiagnostic functioning [8]. Diagnostically, 57.3% had somatic symptom disorders, 56.9% had an anxiety disorder, 49.3% had a personality disorder, and 33.1% had major depression.

### **Main Results:**

Baseline physician and hospital costs were CAD 915 (SD 748) and CAD 3,958 (SD 13,779), respectively (Table 1). Both of these were greater than normal population costs of CAD 600 and 1,389, respectively [7]. Physician costs dropped by CAD 168 per person ( $p < 0.001$ ) the first year and further reduced to below population means in the second, third, and fourth follow-up years (Table 1). Hospital costs dropped markedly by CAD 988 after the first year and reduced further to below population means in the second, third, and fourth follow-up years. Likely due to a skewed data distribution, the difference between hospital costs 1 year before and after ISTDP was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.18$ ). Because of data access limits, statistical comparisons between the second to fourth years versus the first year are not available. The overall average cost reductions per person versus baseline were 25.8, 62.8, 66.5, and 67.3%, respectively, reflecting a total per person difference of CAD 10,841 per person, vastly exceeding the cost of the single trial therapy interview itself.

**Table 1.** Health care costs before and after ISTDP trial therapy

Timeline	Physician costs, CAD	Hospital costs, CAD
<i>Before ISTDP</i>		
Baseline year ( <i>n</i> = 344)	915 (1,309)	3,958 (13,779)
<i>After ISTDP</i>		
Year 1 ( <i>n</i> = 344)	747 (913)	2,866 (17,852)
Year 2 ( <i>n</i> = 289)	583 (700)	1,228 (4,541)
Year 3 ( <i>n</i> = 230)	495 (598)	1,139 (5,733)
Year 4 ( <i>n</i> = 125)	463 (596)	1,130 (3,345)

Values in parentheses are standard deviations. ISTDP, intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy.