***Research Update 3: Somatic Symptom Disorder Outcome Studies of ISTDP***

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There are a large number of studies of Intensive Short-term Dynamic Psychotherapy for somatic symptoms. We see in the table below there are case series and randomized control trials for conditions affecting all body systems. Beyond these there are case reports detailing the method including one by Patricia Coughlin on Inflammatory Bowel Disease <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jclp.20247> . Overall the effects are significant and endure in follow-up.

In 2012 Dr Joel Town and Ellen Drisessen did a meta-analysis of available somatic studies. They found that the treatment effect sizes were medium to large across the available studies. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2013-43689-005>

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Condition** | **Country** | **Study Type** | **Number**  **Cases** | **Outcome** |
| Urethral Syndrome/ Pelvic Pain (1) | Italy | RCT | 36 | ISTDP > Medical TAU |
| Mixed MUS (2) | Canada | Case Series | 29 | Sig symptom reduction |
| Back Pain (3) | USA | Case Series | 47 | Sig Pain Reduction |
| Functional Movement Disorders (4) | USA | Case Series | 9 | Sig Symptom Reduction |
| Chronic Headache (5) | Canada | Case Series | 29 | Sig Symptom and cost reduction |
| Pseudoseizures (6) | Canada/  UK | Case Series | 28 | Sig symptom and cost reduction |
| Chronic Pain (7) | Iran | RCT | 63 | ISTDP> Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction and TAU |
| Chronic Pain (8) | Iran | RCT | 81 | ISTDP in person > Skype |
| Chronic Pain (9) | Iran | RCT | 100 | ISTDP by Skype > TAU |
| Irritable Bowel Syndrome (10) | UK | RCT | 102 | ISTDP > Medical TAU |
| MUS in Emergency (11) | Canada | Controlled | 77 | Sig reduction pre post and vs referred control |
| Mixed MUS + (12) | Canada | Controlled | 890 | Sig health cost and symptom reduction vs referred control |
| Atopic Dermatitis (13) | Denmark | RCT | 32 | ISTDP> Ctrl in Anxious Cases |
| Bruxism (14) | Italy | RCT In Progress |  |  |
| Functional Neurological (15) | UK | Case Series | 11 | Improvement on multiple domains |
| Mixed MUS in Family Practice (16) | Canada | Case Series | 37 | Sig symptom improvement |
| Chronic Pain (39) | Iran | RCT | 341 | Sig symptom effects ISTDP=CBT |
| Inflammatory Bowel Diseases (17) | Australia | Case Series | 7 | Improvement on IBD symptoms |

*MUS= Medically Unexplained Symptoms, TAU= Treatment as Usual, RCT=Randomized Controlled Trial*

Beyond these studies, as previously reported there are some cost-based studies pointing to healthcare cost reduction that persist in long follow-up of these treated patients.

There are other studies examining some of the processes of change in the samples. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10503307.2017.1300353>

Patients report the key issue is emotional processing. ( <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/article-their-pain-is-real-and-for-patients-with-mystery-illnesses-help-is/> )

Further a previous meta-analysis In 2009 we also found that treatments for somatic disorders that included emotional focusing such as ISTDP had greater outcomes. [Link Here](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=2ahUKEwj0gPbYi7ngAhWxmOAKHRAsCjsQFjADegQIBRAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fpdfs.semanticscholar.org%2Ff663%2F6b3c17c51f9f18bc4b002615a24555ec119a.pdf&usg=AOvVaw3mh16NYNFVzTLQo1HjJoPC)

So, these are important findings because of the massive burden and cost of somatic symptom conditions and a major need for available short-term treatments. Once again treatments like ISTDP, emphasizing powerful therapeutic engagement, emotional processing toward healing attachment trauma, appear to be important, effective and able to provide long-term benefits.

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