

## Health Outcomes and Economic Benefits of Psychological Interventions

*“The Efficacy and Effectiveness of Psychological Treatments” (2013)*, a report released by the Canadian Psychological Association and co-authored by Dr. John Hunsley, Ms. Katherine Elliott and Ms. Zoe Therrien of the School of Psychology, University of Ottawa and released by the Canadian Psychological Association. Here are some of the findings:

- High quality research on psychological treatments provides extensive evidence that psychological interventions can provide substantial improvements in functioning for those individuals suffering from mood disorders (e.g. *depression*) as well, if not better than, medications and with fewer relapses and side effects.
- Adding psychological interventions to medication results in better adherence to treatments, reduced subjective burden of disease and lower suicide rates.
- There is strong evidence to support the use of psychotherapy as a first line treatment, across the lifespan, for anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, specific phobias, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. The strength of psychotherapeutic effects is similar or superior to pharmacological treatments for these disorders, without side effects or addictions.
- In light of the pattern of results and the potential for negative side effects associated with medication, many evidence-based clinical practice guidelines encourage clinicians to consider psychological interventions as the first treatment option to offer to patients with these disorders.
- While for most disorders the supporting evidence is more extensive for adults than it is for young people or older adults, a large number of treatment studies, addressing both efficacy and effectiveness, support the value of psychological approaches for these age groups as well.
- Psychological interventions can also address the psychosocial aspects common in physical conditions such as Congestive Heart Disease (CHD). When added to the usual medical treatments, psychotherapy significantly reduces cardiac-related death. In addition, psychological approaches can be more efficacious in reducing smoking than the usual medical treatment.

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*“Mental Health Promotion and Mental Illness Prevention: The Economic Case” (2011)*, a report released by the Department of Health, London, U.K. was generated by the collaborative efforts of researchers from the Personal Social Services Research Unit, London School of Economics, the Centre for Mental Health and the Centre for Economics of Mental Health, Institute of Psychiatry at King’s College, London, U.K.

- Significant economic benefits were found from the review of non-pharmaceutical interventions chosen because they had demonstrated major gains in improving the health and quality of life of individuals impacted by major mental disorders.
- The economic model included cost benefits for the National Health Service, other public services (social services, justice system, penal institutions) and the private sector (lost productivity, health benefits, etc.).
- Effective interventions for **conduct disorders** were projected to save in the National Health Service 10.5 pounds for every pound spent. The total savings in both the public and non-public sectors are 91.62 pounds for every pound spent (i.e. gross savings were estimated over the course of 25 years to exceed the average cost of the intervention by a factor of 96 to 1)
- **Bullying reduction strategies** do not accrue any benefits for the health sector but school based interventions to reduce bullying were estimated to accrue savings on the order of 14.35 to 1 in other public and private sectors. The model estimates that, averaged across all children whether bullied or not, would equate to savings of 1080 pounds per school pupil per year.

- A program demonstrating the value of early screening of patients at **risk of suicide** were then provided with 12 CBT sessions. The model indicates that close to 2000 deaths by suicide would be prevented in any 10-year period. The total ROI was found to be 0.08 to 1 for the NHS and 0.05 to 1 for other public services. The non-public sector ROI raised the total ROI to 43.99 to 1. Overall, the savings were projected to be 1.27 billion pounds in a ten-year period. Bridge Safety barriers were shown to have an ROI of 54.45 to 1.
  - For every pound spent on the early identification and provision of interventions for **psychosis**, the combined return on investment is 12.3 to 1 for the NHS alone. When savings in other public sector services and the private sectors are factored in, the total estimated ROI is 28.24 to 1.
  - The combined impact of programs aimed at reducing postpartum **depression**, early detection of depression in persons diagnosed with diabetes and diagnosis and treatment of depression at work was shown to have an RIO of 6.16 to 1.
  - Screening for **alcohol misuse** produced an ROI of 11.75 to 1.
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**“Improving Access to Psychological Therapies”** is a National Health Service program in the United Kingdom that was implemented a result of the strong evidence of return on investment described above. The program provides up to 12 sessions of psychological treatment to include children adolescents, people with long-term physical conditions, medically unexplained systems or severe mental illnesses.

- The savings accrued have been on the order of \$3000.00 per person.
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**“The Better Access to Mental Health Care Strategy”** was launched in Australia in 2006 to address the high prevalence of mental health disorders. It included the **“Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners Through the Medical Benefits Schedule”**. Following the success of the program and a review of the numerous studies confirming the cost-effectiveness of psychological interventions, Australia launched the **KidsMatter** program to address mental health in early childhood centres and primary schools and **Headspace** for adolescents.

- Cost savings have ranged from \$9,000 to \$23,000 in disability adjusted life years per patient.
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**Health Services Alberta** has taken an approach to the provision of mental health services similar to many organizations in the United States, such as Kaiser Permanente and the Department of Veteran Affairs. Alberta has incorporated psychologists into their comprehensive health care approach. In Alberta, psychologists diagnose and treat emotional, behavioural and cognitive problems in children, adults, families or groups. They assess and treat the psychological factors associated with physical health problems. Some of the core duties can include performing screening and intake procedures, administering and interpreting psychological tests, providing psychological interventions, facilitating referrals and participating in formal research programs. Psychologists at Alberta Health Services spend much of their time in direct contact with clients and are employed at a number of different facilities including hospitals, clinics, and mental health facilities.

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**Summary:** In province after province, in country after country, these studies and others are being used to demonstrate the positive outcomes of psychological interventions on the health and well-being of individuals that suffering from mental disorders - and the benefits to the economy.

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