

Antidepressants and psychotherapy effective in irritable bowel syndrome

New research suggests that antidepressants and cognitive behavioural therapy may help people with irritable bowel syndrome.

Alex Ford and colleagues in Canada carried out a systematic review of 32 trials, in which 19 compared behavioural therapy, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, relaxation techniques and hypnotherapy with usual care. Twelve compared antidepressants with placebo and one trial compared both antidepressants and behavioural therapy with placebo. Nearly 800 patients were involved in the trials that were reviewed.

The authors found good evidence that both behavioural therapy and antidepressants reduced the risk of symptoms persisting - contrary to previous studies that had equivocal findings. As a result, the authors suggest that the guidelines on treatment of irritable bowel syndrome should be updated to include these methods.

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