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The biological effects of psychotherapy in major depressive disorders. A review of neuroimaging studies.

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Abstract

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is a syndrome, which is quite frequent in the society, can be recurrent and shows symptoms of emotional, cognitive and behavioral disorder. Brain imaging studies support that patients diagnosed with MDD suffer dysfunction in limbic structures such as frontal cortex, amygdala, hippocampus and cingulate cortex and basal ganglions that regulate these functions. Psychotherapy is an effective treatment option for prevention of recurrent depressive attacks as well as for acute treatment of depression. It is thought that psychotherapy shows its effect by focusing on misleading cognitions and emotional information processing processes that lead to rise and persistence of symptoms of depression, which in turn boosts problem solving and coping skills. Neurobiological reflections of clinical recovery achieved by psychotherapy are not yet well known. In this study, it is aimed to review cognitive behavioral psychotherapy (CBT), interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) and psychodynamic psychotherapy methods used frequently in treatment of MDD, along with functional brain imaging studies performed on treated depressive patients. Studies show that CBT lead to changes in the prefrontal cortex, cingulate cortex and amygdala metabolisms and activities. Activity of the subgenual cingulate cortex, which takes part in the regulation of the limbic activity, seems to play an important role in the response to CBT like in the response to antidepressant treatment. It was found that interpersonal psychotherapy ensured recovery of metabolism and blood flow in the prefrontal cortex, cingulate cortex and basal ganglions. It was observed that psychodynamic therapy ensured recovery of abnormal activities in especially the prefrontal cortex and cingulate cortex in MDD, similar to the CBT and IPT. There is need for more long-term, follow- up studies in this area. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2016 APA, all rights reserved)

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