

# Treatment of depression in nursing home residents without significant cognitive impairment: a systematic review

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## Abstract

Article contents

### Background:

Depression in nursing facilities is widespread and has been historically under-recognized and inadequately treated. Many interventions have targeted depression among residents with dementia in these settings. Less is known about depression treatment in residents without dementia who may be more likely to return to community living. Our study aimed to systematically evaluate randomized control trials (RCTs) in nursing facilities that targeted depression within samples largely comprised of residents without dementia.

### Methods:

The following databases were evaluated with searches covering January 1991 to December 2015 (PubMed, PsycINFO) and March 2016 (CINAHL). We also examined national and international clinical trial registries including ClinicalTrials.gov. RCTs were included if they were

published in English, evaluated depression or depressive symptoms as primary or secondary outcomes, and included a sample with a mean age of 65 years and over for which most had no or only mild cognitive impairment.

### Results:

A total of 32 RCTs met our criteria including those testing psychotherapeutic interventions ( $n=13$ ), psychosocial and recreation interventions ( $n=9$ ), and pharmacologic or other biologic interventions ( $n=10$ ). Seven psychotherapeutic, six psychosocial and recreation, and four pharmacologic or other biologic interventions demonstrated a treatment benefit.

### Conclusions:

Many studies had small samples, were of poor methodological quality, and did not select for depressed residents. There is limited evidence suggesting that cognitive behavioral therapies, reminiscence, interventions to reduce social isolation, and exercise-based interventions have some promise for decreasing depression in cognitively intact nursing home residents; little can be concluded from the pharmacologic or other biologic RCTs.

### Keywords

mental health    older adults    long-term care

#### Type

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