Psychotherapy in dizziness: a systematic review.

Abstract:
About 30-50% of complex dizziness disorders are organically not sufficiently explained or related to a psychiatric disorder. Of patients with such dizziness disorders, 80% are severely impaired by dizziness in their daily and working lives; nevertheless, they are often not diagnosed or treated adequately. This review aims to give a systematic overview of psychotherapeutic approaches and their efficacy regarding the treatment of dizziness that is medically not sufficiently explained or related to a psychiatric disorder. A systematic literature search was conducted in Medline, PSYNDEx and PsycINFO. Included in this systematic review were (randomised) controlled trials ((R)CTs) concerning psychotherapy in patients with dizziness, medically not sufficiently explained or associated with a psychiatric disorder. If possible, Hedges’ g was used to express the effect sizes (ES) of the treatment. Heterogeneity was assessed using the Q statistic. In addition, the quality of the studies was rated. Three (R)CTs were included. All studies used cognitive-behavioural treatment methods in combination with relaxation techniques or vestibular rehabilitation. All studies suggested that psychotherapy may provide improvement. The mean ES in the treatment groups was 0.46 (95% CI 0.05 to 0.88) for dizziness related outcome, 0.10 (-0.44 to 0.64) for anxiety and 0.17 (-0.24 to 0.58) for depression whereas in the control groups the mean dizziness related ES was -0.04 (-0.44 to 0.37), anxiety
related ES was -0.03 (-0.43 to 0.38) and depression related ES was -0.02 (-0.42 to 0.38). The quality of the studies was average. Sample sizes were small, however, and there was a lack of long term studies. This systematic review provides some preliminary evidence that psychotherapy may be effective in patients with dizziness that is medically not sufficiently explained or due to a psychiatric disorder. The results should be replicated in larger samples and follow-up RCTs.