

Evidence Update

Mental Health Series

April 2006

Can inositol be used to treat depression?

There is insufficient evidence of the effectiveness and safety of inositol for treating depressive disorders.

Inclusion criteria

Studies:

Randomized controlled trials.

Participants:

People with a diagnosed depressive disorder, including major depressive disorder, dysthymic disorder, and bipolar affective disorder.

Intervention:

Inositol compared with placebo; inositol compared with antidepressant medication; inositol plus antidepressant compared with antidepressant alone.

Outcomes:

Resolution of depressive symptoms (primary); drop-out rates; adverse events; quality of life; clinical impression; relapse or onset of manic episode; social and occupational functioning; hospital admissions; death from any cause, suicide or undetermined injury.

Results

- Four trials with a total of 142 participants were included; all were randomized but allocation concealment was unknown.
- There were no significant differences in resolution of depressive symptoms (assessed using the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale) between people taking inositol and those taking glucose placebo, either alone or with antidepressants, (standardized mean score difference -0.08, 95% confidence interval (CI) -0.45 to 0.30; 113 participants, 4 trials).
- There were no significant differences between inositol and placebo in drop-out rates (relative risk 1.49, 95% CI 0.77 to 2.90; 142 participants, 4 trials), or adverse events (relative risk 0.89, 95% CI 0.48 to 1.64 ; 142 participants, 4 trials).
- There were no trials assessing other outcomes.

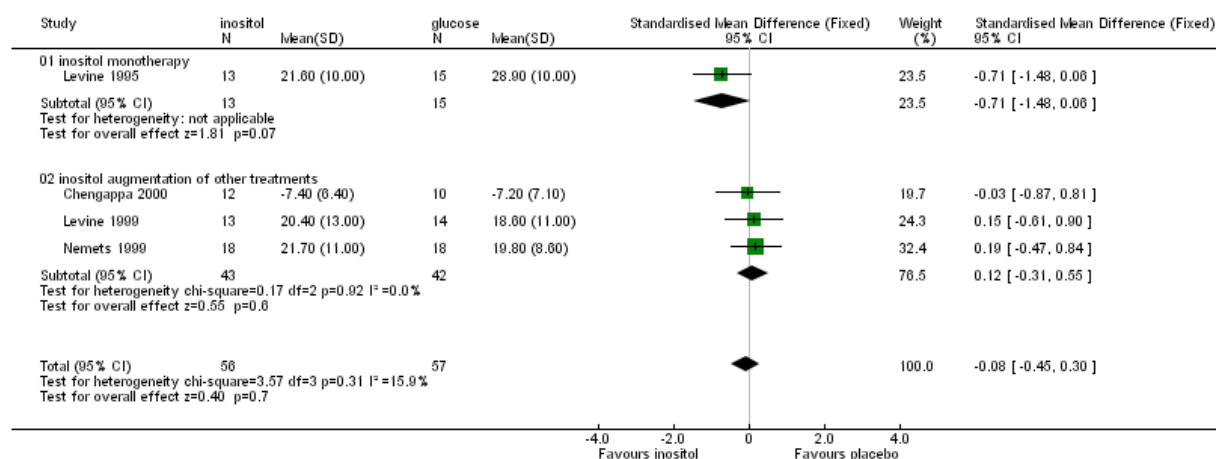


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Inositol versus glucose (placebo): depressive symptom score (Hamilton Scale) at four to six weeks



Authors' conclusions

Implications for practice:

There is insufficient evidence of the efficacy and safety of inositol for treating depressive disorders, either alone or in combination with antidepressant therapy.

Implications for research:

Large, well-designed trials examining the effectiveness of inositol for treating depressive disorders are needed. Trials should report more comprehensively on outcomes including death, quality of life and treatment acceptability.