

Where and How to find useful Research: Practical Suggestions for the Practitioner

“Like finding a needle in a haystack.” *The Velvelettes*.

“It ain’t necessarily so.” George Gershwin.

This guide is not a guide about how to do research. It is a short list of practical suggestions offered to the psychodynamic practitioner who, for the benefit of their patients and to further their own professional development, seeks to access and use research undertaken by others. It is aimed at practitioners who do not have the kinds of links within the NHS or with universities which would allow them ready access to a research culture. This guide takes for granted that its reader is interested in building into their practice some kind of strategy for keeping up-to-date with relevant research and as a minimum is looking for some signage to help with navigating the research terrain.

Broadly, there are 4 distinct areas of research evidence likely to be of relevance to the practitioner and which might feature in any research strategy:

- (1) research into the effectiveness of psychodynamic psychotherapies ('outcome research');**
- (2) research into technique – the processes and mechanisms of therapeutic change, what works for whom and under what conditions ('process-outcome research');**
- (3) research with respect to the functioning of particular clinical presentations or phenomena;**
- (4) related interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research.**

Specifically, as to **(1) and (2)**, the good news is that accessing the relevant evidence could not be easier at the present time. The 'haystack' has been tackled and the

'needles' have been found. Substantial work has been undertaken by the BPC to collate, reference and summarise the results of relevant research into the effectiveness of psychodynamic psychotherapies and what works for whom. The reader is referred to the **Research section of the BPC website** and to the downloadable documents there available. In particular, the reader's attention is drawn to the document "Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: What is the evidence?" and (the continuously updated) 'E-Library of Key Papers relating to the effectiveness of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy'. Particularly helpful are 2 very recent papers included in the E-Library: Fonagy, P., (2015). **The effectiveness of psychodynamic psychotherapies: an update**, World Psychiatry, 14, 137-150; and Leichsenring, F., Klein, S., (2014). **Evidence for Psychodynamic psychotherapy in specific mental disorders: a systematic review**, Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, 28, 4-32. These are summarized in a further downloadable document titled "Will psychodynamic psychotherapy work for my patient?"

As to **(3)**, the most obvious and well-known resource is **PEP-WEB**, an extensive online resource of over 50 national and international journals in several languages, and over 100 classic texts in psychoanalysis including the Standard Edition of the complete works of Freud in German and English, with a search facility allowing the practitioner essentially to conduct a basic literature review with respect to whatever feature of their patient's clinical presentation or other clinical question they might wish to research. Perhaps less well-known is **singlecasearchive.com**. This is a searchable and growing online resource of clinical and empirical single case studies on psychoanalytically-oriented psychotherapies published in ISI-ranked journals. Also potentially useful is **ethos.bl.uk**, a service provided by the British Library, by which its database of over 400,000 theses can be searched and copies of relevant theses ordered online.

As to **(4)**, the June 2013 BPC Discussion paper "UK Psychoanalysis: Mistaking the part for the whole" looks forward to a proposed new training paradigm involving awareness of worldwide research of best practice of different treatments across the mental health field including non-analytic methods that work. This is one area where

the metaphor of 'needle in a haystack' may be more apt. It is unrealistic to expect the individual psychodynamic practitioner without NHS or university links to be able to access this kind of research. The range of disciplines related to the psychodynamic psychotherapies is very extensive, stretching from the social sciences, through the many varieties and models of therapies (analytic and non-analytic) publicly available today, and including perhaps the more obviously related fields of psychiatry and neuroscience. It is suggested that this important gap needs to be addressed collectively, i.e., by the professional bodies themselves, whether alone or jointly.

As to neuroscience specifically, there are well-known writers in this field (e.g., **Erhardt, Knox, Schore, Solms, Wilkinson**) whose work can be followed, together with plenty of regular conferences and workshops. As to psychiatry specifically, **rcpsych.ac.uk** is the website of the Royal College of Psychiatrists which, as well as having a substantial Resources section, publishes online a regular E-newsletter. The Lancet Psychiatry through the website **thelancet.com** also offers a free online monthly newsletter with a regular "research round up" section. The British Neuropsychiatry Association, which aims to disseminate knowledge across both disciplines, also has a regular newsletter to which one can subscribe via their website **bnpa.org.uk**.

More generally as to (1)-(4), the following are also recommended:

- There are certain key writers in the area of research in the psychodynamic psychotherapies (e.g., Peter **Fonagy**, Mary **Target**, Jessica **Yakeley**, Nick **Midgley**, Alessandra **Lemma**, Barbara **Milrod**, Jonathan **Shedler**, David **Taylor**, Falk **Leichsenring**, Helmut **Thoma** and Horst **Kachele**) whose research interests are worth following.
- Each of the **BACP** and **UKCP** websites has a detailed **Research** section. The BACP has a research noticeboard where members can post their areas of research interest; lists of research publications (including systematic reviews often free to download even to non-members); identification of practice research networks (PRNs); and information about its promotion of an evidence-based psychotherapy profession practicing evidence-based competencies. The UKCP has its own Research Faculty with online resources,

has its own PRN which conducts its own research projects and organizes an annual research conference.

- The website of UCL's Psychoanalysis Unit (ucl.ac.uk/psychoanalysis) has substantial research resources including in particular resources as to the effectiveness of particular models of the psychological therapies with particular patient-groups;
- The Society of Psychotherapy Research (psychotherapyresearch.org), which also publishes the Journal of Psychotherapy Research, promotes international communication of psychotherapy research. It organizes an annual conference. Its 2016 Conference "Research Matters – Evidence for an evolving profession" will be held in the UK and will be co-hosted with the BACP;
- The Association for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in the NHS (app-nhs.org.uk) promotes psychodynamic psychotherapy in the NHS. It publishes the journal 'Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy' and hosts research seminars and other research events.
- **The British Journal of Psychotherapy, The International Journal of Psychoanalysis** and **The Journal of Child Psychotherapy** – among the leading journals in the field – also provide a substantial research resource.
- The aim of the Mental Health Innovation Network (mhinnovation.net) is to share knowledge and resources with a view to promoting innovation in the global mental health field. Practitioners can subscribe for free to its monthly E-newsletter.
- **PubMed** is a searchable catalogue of 23 million citations for biomedical literature from MEDLINE, life science journals and online books.