



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **EXERCISE RATED FIRST ON SELF-HELP LIST FOR DEPRESSION**

Even sports-loving Australians can be prone to depression.

The good news is that Australians with clinical depression rate exercise as the most beneficial self-help strategy in dealing with this major health issue that affects one in five people.

A study by the Black Dog Institute showed people who have suffered clinical depression believe that of all the therapies and techniques (not including drugs and psychotherapies) it is exercise that helps the most, followed by yoga/meditation, relaxation and massage.

Acupuncture and homoeopathy returned moderate ranking scores, while the various drugs, herbal preparations and omega 3 fatty acids returned the lowest ratings.

The Institute's study, published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, is based on an anonymous online Australian sample of individuals who had received treatment for clinical depression.

Author of the research, the Institute's Executive Director, Professor Gordon Parker, along with Research Assistant Joanna Crawford, said the study sought to determine from individuals who suffered from clinical depression, how effective they judged a number of antidepressant treatments and strategies.

In total, 2,692 individuals over the age of 18 participated in the study. The majority of the participants had been to a general practitioner, a psychologist and a psychiatrist, resulting in 73.6 percent being prescribed one or more antidepressant medications.

Professor Parker said the public do not necessarily share the views of professionals about effective therapies for depression. This study which obtains the judgments of those who had clearly had significant mood disorders as well as extensive formal treatment, suggests there is a very wide set of strategies used to manage the condition.

The Professor sounded a note of caution about the results of the study. For example, it would strain credulity for a practitioner to recommend exercise instead of a physical treatment, including antidepressants, for a patient with a bipolar depressive disorder.

On the other hand, he said, it would be useful to study the highly rated 'other' strategies more closely, given their positive reception, relatively low costs and limited side-effect profile.

The study looks at the use of different antidepressant medications, psychological therapies and 'other' therapies and techniques (such as exercise and yoga) and created scores for the different treatments ('very effective' 3; 'moderately effective' 2; 'slightly effective' 1; 'not effective' 0).

Examining individual therapies and techniques, the most commonly trialled strategies were: exercise (79.5 percent); relaxation (71.0 percent); a selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitor (SSRI: 62.9 percent); counselling (65.5 percent); yoga/meditation (45.1 percent); cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT: 45.4 percent); other psychotherapy (43.9 percent); and massage (39.3 percent).

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE STUDY GO TO THE BLACK DOG INSTITUTE WEBSITE ([www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au))

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