#### **Depression in Primary Care**

Evidence and Practice

### CAMBRIDGE

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Edited by

Simon Gilbody

Peter Bower



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Simon Gilbody: To Cathy and the joyful chaos that is the Gilbody brood.

Peter Bower: To Luke and Nicki, for taking me away from all this.

# Contents

Notes on contributors Preface		<i>page</i> ix xi
1	<b>Depression in primary care</b> Simon Gilbody	1
2	Models of care for depression Peter Bower and Simon Gilbody	17
3	Linking evidence to practice Peter Bower and Simon Gilbody	31
4	Anatomy of a review Peter Bower and Simon Gilbody	55
5	<b>Education and training</b> Simon Gilbody	73
6	<b>Consultation-liaison</b> John Cape, Craig Whittington and Peter Bower	81
7	Collaborative care Simon Gilbody	87
8	<b>Referral</b> Peter Bower	103
9	Summary of the evidence Peter Bower and Simon Gilbody	111
10	<b>Making it happen</b> Peter Bower and Simon Gilbody	117

#### viii Contents

11	United Kingdom perspective David Richards	127
12	United States perspective Stephen Thielke and Jürgen Unützer	137
13	Conclusions Peter Bower and Simon Gilbody	145
Index		157

# Notes on contributors

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Simon Gilbody is Professor of Psychological Medicine and Health Services Research at the University of York and Hull-York Medical School. He conducts reviews and clinical trials in primary care mental health, and is an honorary consultant in Primary Care Psychiatry. Simon is a longstanding contributor and editor within the Cochrane Collaboration.

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**x** Notes on contributors

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme, and runs a multicentre research team funded by the Medical Research Council and the National Institute for Health Research, which develops and tests new models of delivering treatment.

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Stephen Thielke is Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington and a researcher in the Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center of the Puget Sound VA. His research focuses on health and healthcare utilization during ageing. He is developing predictive models for depression to help with the assessment, longitudinal monitoring, and treatment of mental health symptoms in older adults.

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# Preface

We both have a bit of a reputation as systematic reviewers, and a glance down our CVs means that we are guilty as charged. Frankly, it is not always the best reputation to have. Systematic reviews are sometimes seen as largely technical in nature, ignoring the complex and messy reality of healthcare delivery and reducing everything to a few calculations and a pretty graph. They are also seen as the preserve of methodologically and statistically minded types, the sort of people who are excessively concerned with minutiae and routinely miss the wood while comprehensively searching for the best concealed trees.

Part of the reason for creating this book was to show that reviews can be more than that – that it is possible to link the review process with complex policy issues, and to use the insights generated from reviews to assist in decision making in ways that go beyond simple statements about this or that being effective at such and such a level of significance. However, we also wanted to share our enthusiasm for reviews, because they are actually quite simple and potentially accessible to a wide range of people, and because they remain a crucial part of the scientific armoury and will only get more important as the amount, scope and complexity of research increases.

This book is not meant to provide an answer to the problems of delivering services for depression. The area is too complex, and too value-laden, to submit to such a straightforward approach. What we aim to do is show how the techniques of systematic review and evidence synthesis can be used to make sense of a large and complex literature, to challenge assumptions and provide fresh insights, and add to the debate about the best way to help patients in need. Although the aspiration of the systematic review enterprise is somehow to create a process that would lead to the same result, no matter who did the review, that will only ever remain an aspiration. Ambiguity and subjectivity have a way of creeping into the process, so that the final result is always up for debate. But it is precisely within those debates where the useful work begins.

We would like to acknowledge the many academic and clinical colleagues who have contributed to this endeavour. Some have contributed directly as authors, but we would also like to thank all those colleagues who have shaped our thinking about mental health research and service delivery over the years, and have

xii Preface

thus contributed in a more roundabout way. Multidisciplinary research being what it is, there are simply too many to name you all, but special thanks (in appropriately random order) go to Karina Lovell, Martin Roland, Linda Gask, Bonnie Sibbald, Anne Rogers, Michael King, Michael Barkham, Robert West, Andre Tylee, Rachel Churchill, Allan House, Trevor Sheldon, David Richards and David Torgerson.

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