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Psychotherapy: The power of mind to change brain cells

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Introduction: Psychotherapy is evidenced to be as effective as pharmacological treatment in treating a wide range of psychiatric disorders including major depressive disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and different anxiety disorders. Most of antidepressants have clear and well known mechanisms of action and cause specific brain changes. Regarding psychotherapy; it has been used effectively for decades without knowing a clear mechanism of action for it.

Objectives: This presentation will highlight the changes that the psychotherapy causes in the brain which mediates its treating effects; and how the change in minds of the patients (i.e., their thoughts) can cause changes in the function and more interestingly the structure of the brain cells themselves.

Methods: Critical review of various current and most updated literature on the topic.

Results: Psychotherapy can cause molecular changes on the level of the receptors and transporters of different neuro-transmitters. Brain function changes on the level of brain networks and circuits and brain physiological response to certain chemicals. Brain structure changes on the level of both grey matter and white matter.

Conclusions: Although still preliminary, the studies using neuroimaging for measuring change caused by psychotherapy will in the long run lead to a more understanding of how different psychotherapies work. This may lead to a development in which specific modes of psychotherapy can be designed to target specific brain circuits.

Biography

Aboeizz Kalboush is an Egyptian Consultant Psychiatrist. He has received his Master's degree in Psychiatry and Neurology from Ain-Shams University, Egypt in 2007, Arab Board in Psychiatry in 2007 and Egyptian Board in Psychiatry in 2008. He is the Head of Psychiatry Department in Al Noor Specialist Hospital, Saudi Arabia since June 2013. He is responsible for training of medical students (both undergraduates & postgraduates) in Psychiatry. He has participated as a speaker in international conferences in psychiatry beside his continuous educational activities directed to non-psychiatric doctors and health care staff to provide them with the updates in field of psychiatry as they have an important midway role between the psychiatric patients and the psychiatrist. He works in parallel on two main goals: Exploring the neuro-biological basis of both the different psychiatric disorders specially the challenging ones and their psychotherapeutic treatments.

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