



catalyst
CONSORTIUM

Australian Consortium for Research Excellence
in Reducing Persistent Violence and
Sexual Offending

Prevention and Intervention Summary Report 1

Effectiveness of psychological treatments for violent offenders in custodial, community and forensic mental health settings: A systematic review and meta-analysis

- ✓ We found psychological treatments with violent offenders to be effective in reducing further violent and criminal behaviour.
- ✓ High dose, high intensity treatments that included specific components such as relapse prevention, role playing and homework have the greatest impact on violent and general reoffending.

July 2018

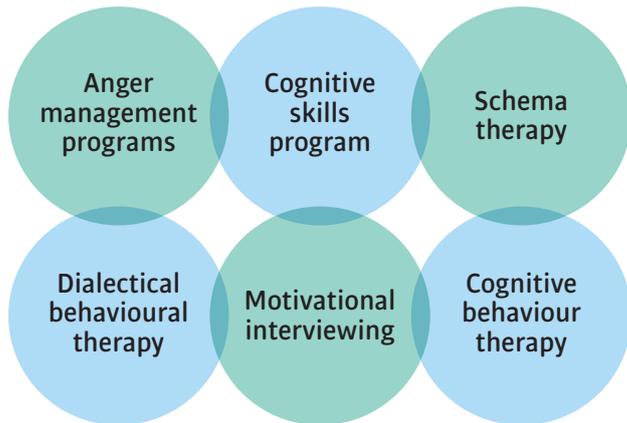


Centre for Forensic
Behavioural Science

Background

Violence is a major problem in terms of its effects on victims, correctional services, the healthcare sector, and society more generally. Repeatedly engaging in violent behaviour also reduces quality of life for offenders. Currently, it is unclear whether treatment approaches for violent offenders work and, if they do work, which treatments are most effective in reducing violent reoffending. The most effective way to 'take stock' of the existing information about violent offender treatment is to conduct a systematic review and meta-analysis.

Psychological treatment approaches



Aim of the review

We conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of research studies that evaluated the effectiveness of **psychological treatments** in adult violent offenders across custodial, community (e.g., violent offenders supervised on community corrections orders or parole), and forensic mental health settings (e.g., violent offenders in psychiatric hospitals).

Key review questions

- 1 Are psychological treatments delivered to violent offenders in custodial, community and forensic mental health settings effective in reducing violent and general reoffending?
- 2 What factors might influence the effectiveness of psychological treatment with violent offenders?

Approach to the review

We conducted a comprehensive search for studies that evaluated the effects of psychological treatment among adult violent offenders. To be included in our review, studies were required to:

- (a) include a group of comparison violent offenders that did not receive the treatment under consideration; and
- (b) measure the effects of treatment on at least one of either violent reoffending, general reoffending, or violent and/or general misconduct (e.g., assault on staff, property damage, disobey a direct order) within a correctional or hospital setting.

We identified a total of 27 independent evaluations, 24 of which provided enough information to be included in the statistical analysis. These studies were conducted between 1993 and 2017, inclusively. Most were conducted in Canada (9), with the remaining conducted in the UK (8), the USA (4), New Zealand (4), and Australia (2).

What is a systematic review?

- Combines *all* relevant research that exists on a particular topic
- Follows pre-defined 'rules' for locating, selecting, and evaluating relevant studies
- Integrates and summarises the results from all relevant studies and provides conclusions and recommendations.

What is a meta-analysis?

- Refers to how the results of a systematic review are integrated
- As well as providing a descriptive summary of the results, a meta-analysis uses statistical procedures to combine and summarise the results.

Are psychological treatments with violent offenders effective?

Violent and general reoffending

19 Studies:

- 13 prison based
- 5 community based
- 1 forensic mental health based

Psychological treatments with violent offenders were effective at reducing violent and general re-offending, with a difference in percentage reconvicted of about 10% for violent re-offending and 11% for general re-offending.

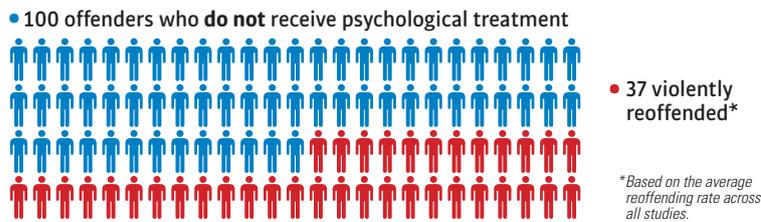
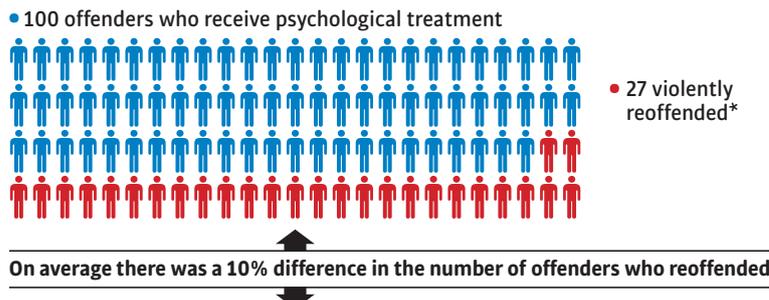
Violent and general misconducts in correctional or hospital settings

7 Studies:

- 3 prison based
- 4 forensic mental health based

Psychological treatments with violent offenders were associated with a small reduction in the rate of violent and general institutional misconduct.

An example of the average effect of psychological treatment on violent reoffending



What factors influence treatment effectiveness?

Treatment variables

Duration and Nature of Treatment

Trends for larger reductions in violent reoffending for:

- ✓ Intensive multi-target treatments delivered over a longer period
- ✓ Treatments involving more frequent sessions per week
- ✓ Treatments delivered in a treatment/therapeutic community unit
- ✓ Treatments incorporating group-based work.

Number of Treatment Components

- ✓ A greater number of treatment components was associated with larger reductions in violent and general reoffending.

Treatment Components

Significantly larger reductions in violent reoffending when:

- ✓ Relapse prevention addressed
- ✓ Role play included.

Trends for larger reductions in violent reoffending when:

- ✓ Homework included
- ✓ Basic life-skills (e.g., literacy/numeracy) **NOT included**
- ✓ Interpersonal skills included
- ✓ Anger control included.

Study Methodology Factors

Trends for larger reductions in violent reoffending in studies with poorer methodologies, such as those that:

- Excluded treatment drop outs
- Used samples judged to be at risk of bias (e.g., non-randomised/non-matched samples, smaller samples).

Sample Characteristics

Trends for larger reductions in violent and general reoffending in studies that:

- Used 'high' risk offender samples
- Used incarcerated samples.

Key limitations

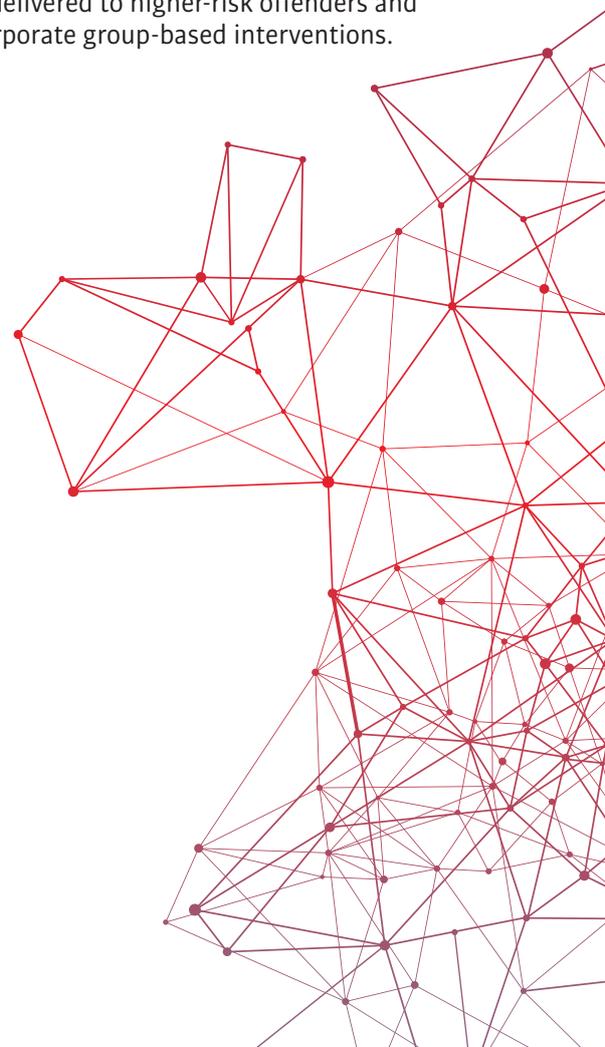
- ⚠ There are only a relatively small number of high quality studies in this area, especially in community and forensic mental health settings. This makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions.
- ⚠ Determining factors that impact the effectiveness of treatment was limited by the level of detail described in each study.
- ⚠ There were not enough data across the studies to examine the impact of treatment programs on frequency of reoffending, severity of reoffending, or time to reoffending.

Key implications

On average, psychological treatment programs for violent offenders have a significant positive effect on violent and general reoffending.

Although further research is needed, psychological treatment programs with violent offenders may be most effective in reducing further offending when they:

- ✓ Are intensive, involving 250+ hours of treatment delivered over 3–4 sessions per week.
- ✓ Adopt a multi-target approach, that includes relapse prevention, role playing, interpersonal skills, anger control, and homework activities.
- ✓ Are delivered within a designated treatment/therapeutic community unit.
- ✓ Are delivered to higher-risk offenders and incorporate group-based interventions.





Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science

Level 1, 582 Heidelberg Road

Alphington Victoria 3078

AUSTRALIA

E: info-CFBS@swin.edu.au

T: +61 3 9214 3887

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Detailed study findings can be found here: Papalia, N, Spivak, B, Daffern, M, Ogloff, JRP. A meta - analytic review of the efficacy of psychological treatments for violent offenders in correctional and forensic mental health settings. Clin Psychol Sci Pract.2019;e12282. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp.12282>

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