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Title	Identifying alternative mental health interventions: a systematic review of randomized controlled trials of chanting and breathwork
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Research question/s	Investigates the effects of two religious/spiritual (R/S) practices (breathwork and chanting) on mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety, stress, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms).
Methodology	<p>This study is a systematic review of peer-reviewed randomized controlled trials. The review defines sensorimotor R/S practices as those that originate in a religion or spiritual tradition and that include both sensory and motor components. Whilst yoga, qigong and tai chi are considered by the study as R/S practices, studies involving these practices are excluded as they have already been subject to review. The protocol of the review was registered on the International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews (PROSPERO), and the review was conducted/reported according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review Guidelines (PRISMA). Four leading databases were searched: CINAHL, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, and ProQuest. Searches were limited to the English language and randomized controlled trials; unpublished studies, case reports, and grey literature were not included. The Cochrane risk of bias tool was used to assess the risk of bias in the 15 RCTs reviewed. Overall quality of the studies varied: 12 (80%) were rated as high quality and three (20%) were fair. Most studies revealed a high risk of bias in blinding of participants/outcome assessors, however overall risk of bias in all other components was low.</p>
Summary of findings	<p>BREATHWORK 8 studies investigated the effectiveness of breathwork on anxiety, with all reporting statistically significant reduction in anxiety symptoms. Whilst Breathwork was shown to reduce depressive symptoms in all 8 studies that examined this area, statistical significance was only reached in 5 studies. Of the two studies investigating breathwork effects on stress, one reported a statistically significant reduction in stress level. The sole study examining Breathwork effect of PTSD symptoms showed a significant reduction which was maintained at one year follow-up. Findings of the review regard breathwork as a promising adjunctive intervention for people with depression and anxiety.</p> <p>CHANTING Three studies investigated the effect of chanting on anxiety, with all three reporting statistically significant reductions in anxiety levels. Three studies examined the effect of chanting on depression, all 3 showed a reduction in depression however only one of the studies reported a statistically significant reduction. The one study which investigated the effects of chanting on perceived stress demonstrated a significant reduction in</p>

Comments/discussion points

symptoms. None of the studies investigated the effect of chanting on PTSD symptoms. The review suggests a potentially beneficial role of chanting to manage anxiety; the results regarding chanting and depression and stress are deemed to have insufficient evidence to draw conclusions.

The review comments on the role of R/S affiliation within the studies examined; none of the breathwork studies required participants to be affiliated with a religion or a spiritual tradition, prompting the authors to suggest that breathwork practice appears effective without R/S affiliation and that it could be a suitable adjunct intervention in clinical settings. Half of the studies on chanting however did specify participant affiliation with a particular religion or spiritual tradition; as none of the included studies in the review compared the effect of chanting with or without R/S affiliation, the authors are unable to clarify whether R/S affiliation was a contributory factor to mental health outcome. None of the studies in the review reported the clinical significance of the practices. Suggestions are made that future investigations might examine evidence of objective measures such as biomarkers, physiological measures, as well as exploration of the underlying mechanisms of sensorimotor R/S practices.