

## **Eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) – impact on substances use: a literature review**

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**Introduction:** EMDR is an effective intervention for post-traumatic stress disorder with similar efficacy to Trauma focussed cognitive behaviour therapy. Over the last two and a half decades EMDR has been studied in people with a history of trauma and substance use disorders.

**Method:** A search of Psychinfo, Medline and Embase using the keywords: eye movement desensitization therapy and substances related disorders, drug abuse/ dependence, alcohol abuse, alcoholism, addiction, tobacco dependence was conducted to identify relevant articles for this review.

**Results:** 52 articles were identified. After removing non-English language articles, review articles, and other studies, 16 articles were identified reporting on substance use outcomes including case studies (3 articles), case series (7 articles, pooled n=56), case-controlled studies (2 articles, n=21,112) and RCTs (4 articles, n=12, 34,89,109). Studies were conducted across Europe, USA, China, and Australia. Substance use disorders studied include: alcohol (9 studies), cannabis (3), opiates (2), tobacco (2) cocaine (1), in a range of settings including outpatient treatment, residential treatment, drug court and methadone treatment. Outcomes reported include trauma symptom severity and substance use outcomes. Number of EMDR sessions was reported (2-15 sessions) and standard care described.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Both trauma-focused and substance use-focused EMDR holds promise as an intervention of patients with combined trauma and substance use problems. Alcohol has been investigated more than other substances to date. EMDR may have a unique role for people with combined substance use and complex trauma.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** EMDR is safe does not appear to be associated with increase in substance use in selected populations when conducted by trained clinicians.

**Implications for Translational Research:** Additional research is required to better understand the role of EMDR in drug and alcohol settings.

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