

# Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing Therapy for People with Intellectual Disability in the Treatment of Emotional Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: A Scoping Review

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## Background

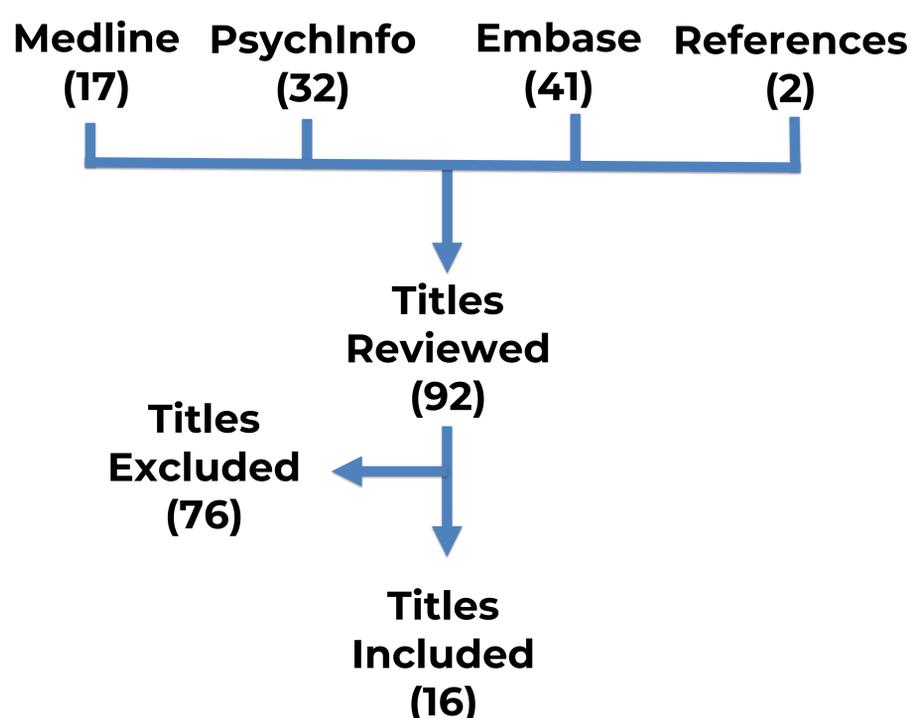
Individuals with ID are at significant risk of developing emotional trauma and PTSD due to altered neuropsychological functioning, increased chance of experiencing adverse life events and difficulty expressing emotions<sup>1,2</sup>. EMDR is efficacious in the general population, but research lacks evidence to suggest EMDR remains effective in ID. NICE lacks guidance for individuals with ID and PTSD as a result<sup>3</sup>.

## Aims

- To assess the efficacy of EMDR to treat PTSD and emotional trauma in people with ID
- To suggest areas for future research

## Methodology

- A scoping review using PRISMA-ScR guidance was conducted
- Health databases searches were conducted in June 2020
- No exclusions related to study design helped to capture the breadth of available information



- Articles were summarised, appraised and collated into tables
- Papers were assessed for quality using the Oxford Centre for Evidence-based Medicine – Levels of Evidence (GRADE) criteria

## Results

**13 studies possessed GRADE score 4 or below**

1. A RCT found EMDR to be as effective as standard care alone for improving symptoms of PTSD and emotional trauma
2. A qualitative study described disruption to the therapeutic alliance and rigidity of protocol
3. A book publication described an adverse reaction to EMDR where the patient fled the treatment room

## Discussion

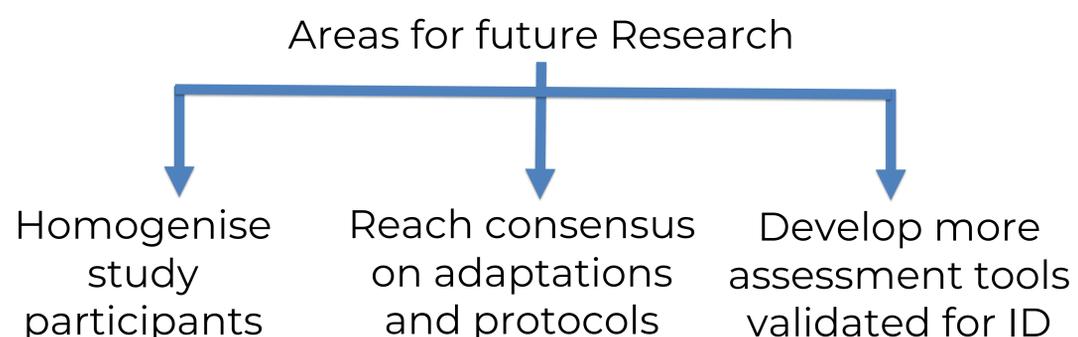
Heterogeneity was high amongst the majority of participants who possessed varying ID severities, levels of verbal communication, autism diagnoses, psychotropic drug prescriptions and comorbidities

EMDR protocol varied widely between studies, common adaptations using alternative bilateral stimulation, adaptation to subjective units of distress and validity of cognition scales, use of the Lovett storytelling method and increased verbal input from the therapist

A vast number of PTSD and emotional trauma assessment tools were used, with only one study using a tool approved for use in ID

## Conclusion

**It is not possible to conclude whether EMDR is efficacious in ID from current literature**



1) Bomyea, J., Risbrough, V., & Lang, A. J. (2012). A consideration of select pre-trauma factors as key vulnerabilities in PTSD. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 32(7), 630-641.  
2) Wigham, S., & Emerson, E. (2015). Trauma and life events in adults with intellectual disability. *Current developmental disorders reports*, 2(2), 93-99.  
3) National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2018) *Post-traumatic stress disorder* (NICE Guideline No. 116) Retrieved from <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng116/resources/posttraumatic-stress-disorder-pdf-66141601777861>