

# 10. Recommendations for future research

During the process of preparing these guidelines, multiple gaps in knowledge were detected, for which well-designed studies are required. Proposals from other sources<sup>21, 78, 167</sup> were also taken into account.

## Screening

- ~ Study the cost-effectiveness of screening programmes in risk groups and in the different levels of healthcare.

## Suicide

- ~ Study the possible effects of various pharmacological or psychotherapeutic treatments on suicidal ideas and behaviours.

## Drugs

- ~ Study the role of drugs in the management of mild depression, at the primary care level.
- ~ Do comparative studies with multiple arms that compare a drug versus a drug and placebo, with a long term follow-up and a sufficient statistical strength to detect relevant clinical differences.
- ~ Foster the research of independent studies avoiding the sponsorship of the pharmaceutical industry.
- ~ Promote studies on the onset of clinical improvement and the time necessary for reaching the maximum level of improvement using different pharmacological treatments.
- ~ Study the optimum duration of pharmacological treatment in each risk group, drug and dose.
- ~ Compare the adverse effects of different drugs through larger and more rigorous observational studies.

## Relapses

- ~ Study the characteristics of patients at a high risk of relapse.
- ~ Perform studies to more accurately determine the time of duration for treatment in patients with a different risk of recurrence.

## Resistant depression

- ~ Study the most effective therapeutic strategies for resistant depression, both pharmacological and non-pharmacological.
- ~ Comparative studies would be necessary regarding the different possible options to be adopted after a first treatment failure: dose maintenance, antidepressant switch, combination of the same or augmentation with other drugs. It would be important to differentiate between a partial response and the absence of a response, given that it seems that the right treatment strategy could be different.

- ~ Studies of suitable duration that cover antidepressant and augmentation combination strategies are needed. Studies that evaluate the optimum doses of T3, lithium and pindolol are also necessary.
- ~ It would also be necessary to design research that assesses the possibility of combining pharmacological treatment with psychotherapeutic treatment in the management of resistant depression.

## Psychotherapy

- ~ Use medium- and long-term clinical trials to study the efficacy of the various types of psychotherapy in the different levels of healthcare.
- ~ Trials for determining the most appropriate duration of psychotherapeutic treatment.
- ~ Design research that assesses the possibility of combining pharmacological treatment with psychotherapeutic treatment.

## ECT

- ~ Promote additional research to evaluate the long-term effect of the technique and the efficacy of maintenance ECT as treatment for depression.

## Self-help

- ~ Develop adapted material for self-help programmes and test its efficacy through controlled studies.

## Support groups

- ~ Determine the role of social support for isolated or vulnerable people.

## Exercise

- ~ New clinical trials are needed, which, while differentiating the sub-groups of mild, moderate and severe depression, compare the effects of different forms of physical exercise and clarify the dose and appropriate intensity of the same.

## Acupuncture

- ~ Perform additional, randomised controlled trials, with adequate statistical power and a good methodological design, which correctly evaluate the efficacy of acupuncture, thereby comparing this technique with other therapeutic alternatives and evaluating the long-term outcomes and side effects.

## General

- ~ Study the effect of implementing corrective measures in the system, which will allow detecting quality problems and monitoring the evolution of those problems.
- ~ Study the effect of integrating help tools for the management of depression in electronic medical histories.
- ~ Study appointment improvement systems and their effect on therapeutic compliance.
- ~ Study the effectiveness of the various methods of implementing clinical practice guidelines.