



PJ Sparer, MD Memorial Visiting Professorship Endowment Fund

This fund was established by Mrs. PJ Sparer, being deeply interested in continuing her late husband's good works and commemorating his interest in Psychiatry and Medicine, and his dedication as a College of Medicine Faculty Professor from 1951 until retirement in 1969.

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Combining Neuromodulatory Therapeutics & Psychosocial Treatment for Unipolar Depression

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Center of Excellence*



Disclosures

- Financial Support
 - NIMH, National Science Foundation, Blue Gator Foundation, Watzinger Foundation, Myocarditis Foundation, Mayo Foundation
- Off-label/Investigational Uses
 - This presentation will mention FDA-approved therapeutics for TRD but will focus on investigational medications
- Patents
 - U.S. Patent No. 11869633 ("Analytics and machine learning framework for actionable intelligence from clinical and omics data")



Starting from the basic premise that the health department encompasses all the health needs and problems of the community, the author presents a general sketch of a plan for mental hygiene in a modern health department. A discussion by Dr. Lemkau follows.

**MENTAL HYGIENE IN A MODERN HEALTH
DEPARTMENT PROGRAM**

GENERAL PERSPECTIVE AND PROGRAM PLANNING

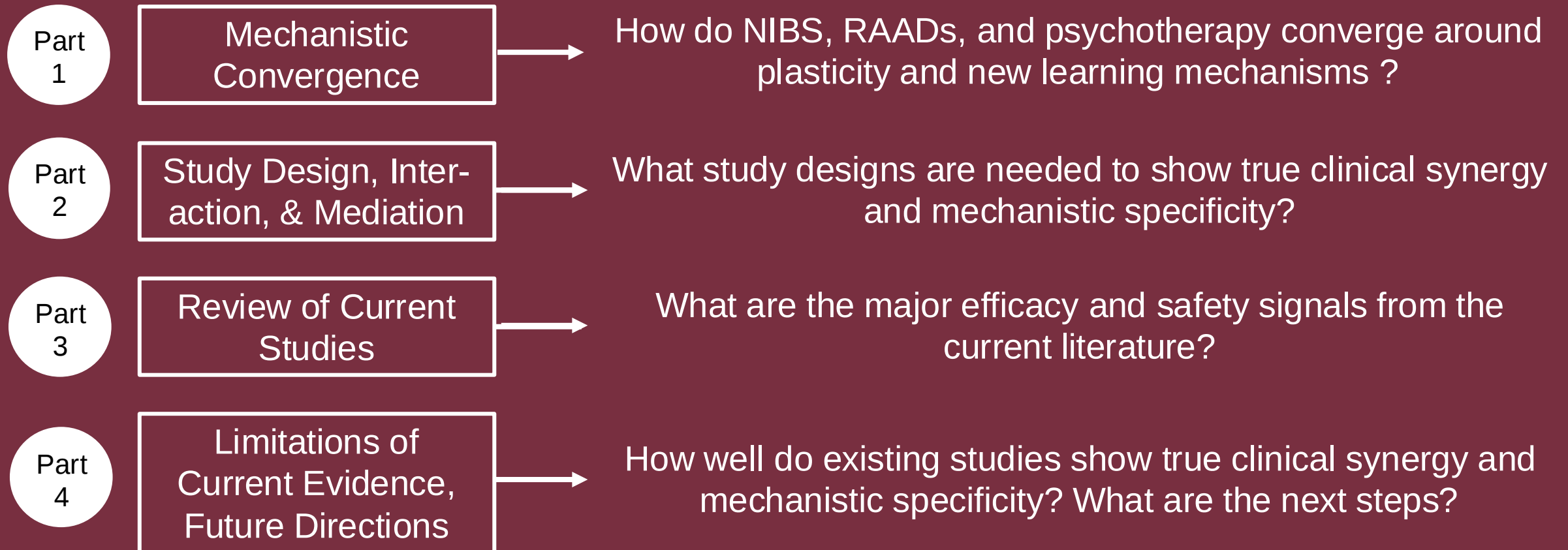
P. J. Sparer, M.D.

Phineas J. Sparer, MD
Professor Emeritus of
Preventive Medicine &
Psychiatry

Dr. Sparer is professor of psychiatry and preventive medicine, Department of Psychiatry, University of Tennessee College of Medicine, Memphis, Tenn.

This paper was originally presented before the annual meeting of the Southern Branch of the American Public Health Association, Little Rock, Ark., 1958, and then later presented before the American Psychiatric Association, Philadelphia, Pa., April 25-30, 1959.

How This Discussion is Organized



The Clinical Problem¹⁻³



*Depression affects
over 350 million
people worldwide...*



Almost **unparalleled burden** owing to high prevalence, adverse effects on functioning, direct/indirect costs, and early mortality



Effective treatments exist, but are often slow in onset, with **variable** and **incomplete responses** (especially durable remission)



These limitations have opened the door to newer neuromodulatory therapeutics, including **NIBS** and **RAADs**

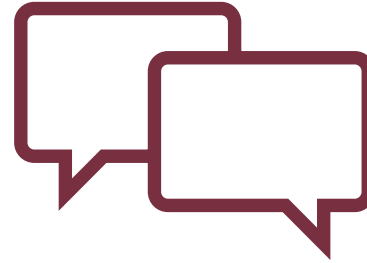
*Can biological interventions create
neurobiological windows enabling more rapid,
complete, or durable effects of psychotherapy
in depression?*

Key Definitions for This Lecture



Non-Invasive Brain Stimulation (NIBS)¹⁻³

- **Specific interventions:** rTMS, deep TMS, theta-burst stimulation, tDCS, tACS



Psychosocial Treatments^{6,7}

- **Manualized Psychotherapy:** BA, CBT, mbCBT, BCBT-SP, ACT, IPT, Unified Protocol, etc.
- **Other Psychotherapy or Psychosocial Treatment(s):** digital/computer-assisted CBT, Cognitive Control Training, Mental Health Coaching, Automated Self-Association Training, etc.



Rapidly-Acting Antidepressants (RAADs)^{4,5}

- **Ketaminoids:** Racemic IV ketamine, intranasal esketamine, other psychoactive ketamine metabolites
- **Psychedelics:** psilocybin, DMT/ayahuasca, others

¹ Nejati V et al. J Neural Transm. 2025;132:369-385.

³ Chung SW et al. Depress Anxiety. 2015;32:182-192.

⁴ Duman RS et al. Nat Med. 2016;22:238-249.

⁵ Ko K et al. J Affect Disord. 2023;322:194-204.

⁶ Clough BA, Casey LM. Clin Psychol Rev. 2011;31:279-292.

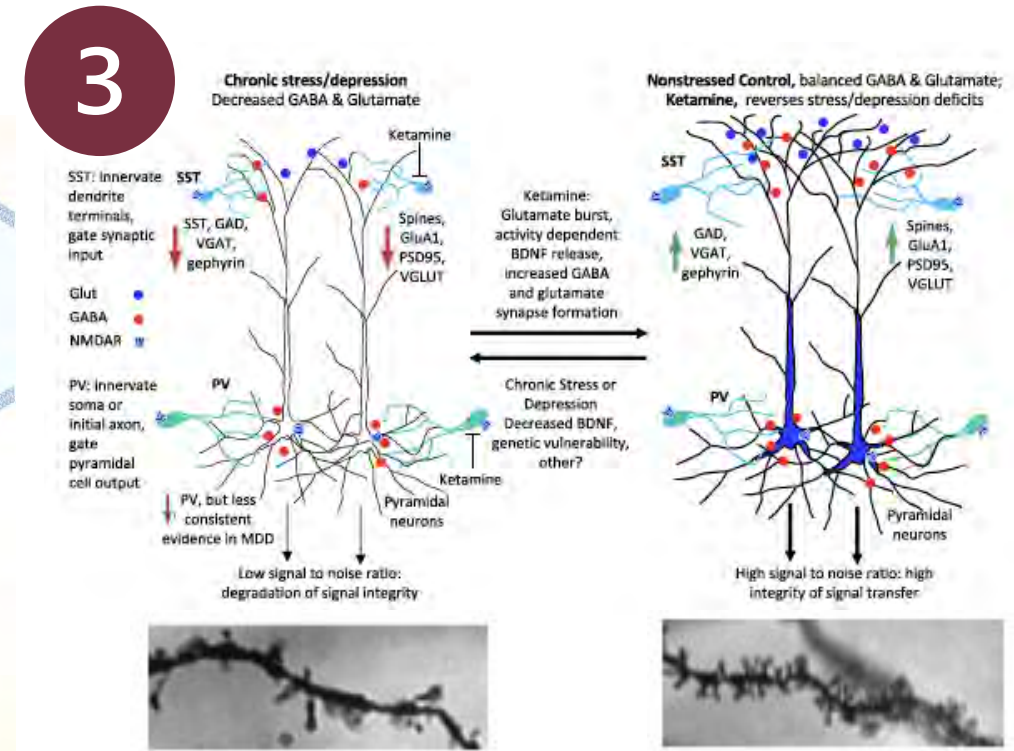
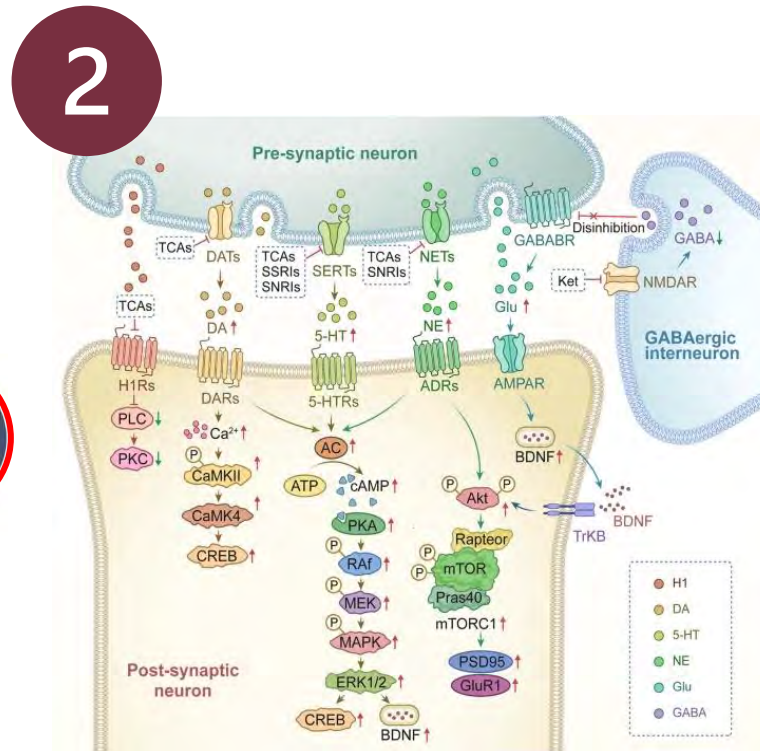
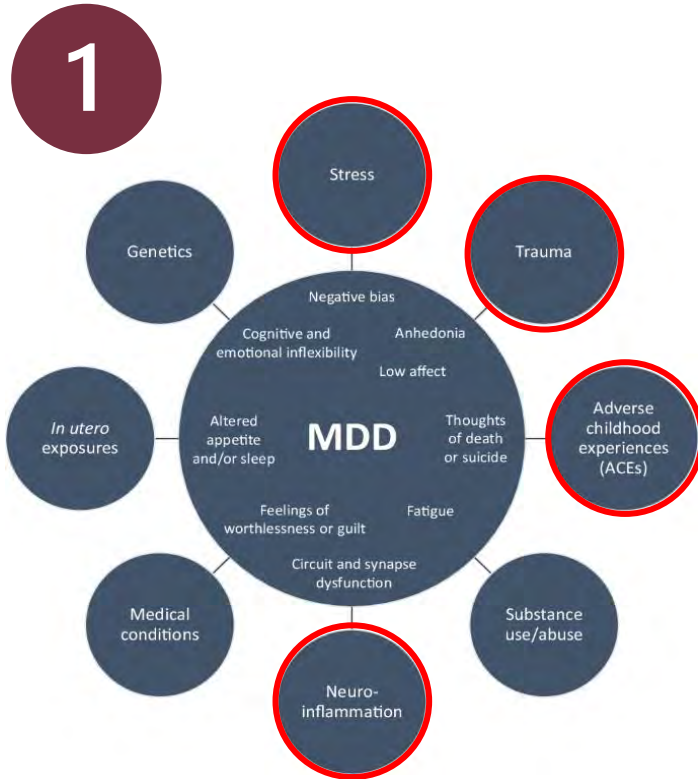
⁷ Cuijpers P et al. J Consult Clin Psychol. 2008;76:909-922.

Part 1.

Mechanistic Convergence



Neuroplasticity and Depression (Pt. 1)¹⁻³



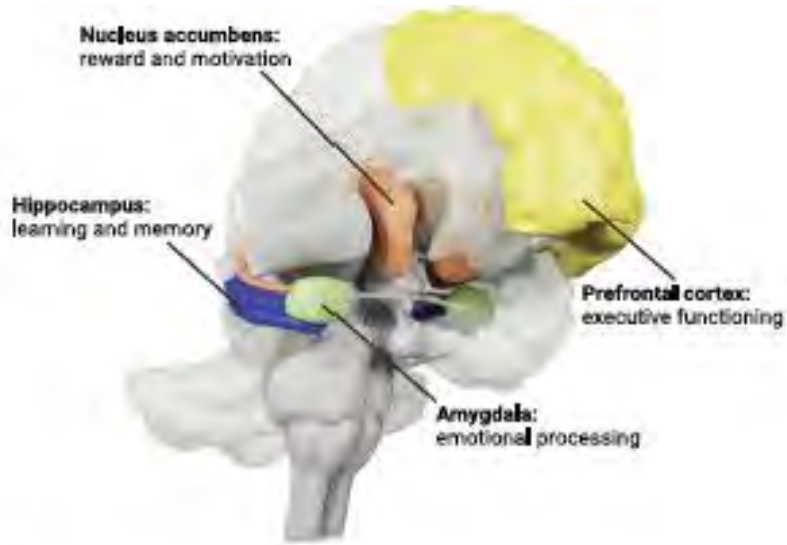
¹ Pittenger C, Duman RS. Neuropsychopharmacol Rev. 2008;33:88-109.

² Page CE et al. Mol Psychiatry. 2024;29:3802-3813.

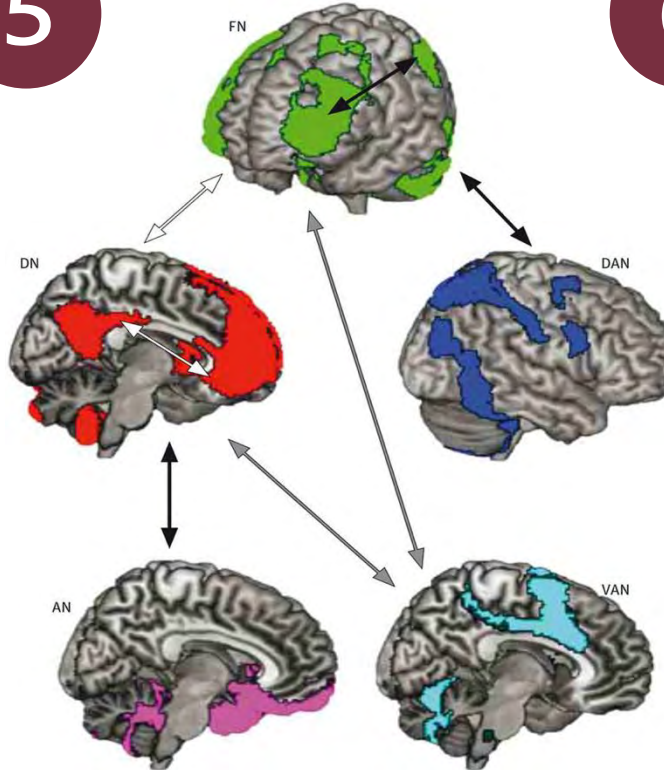
³ Cui L et al. Signal Transduction & Targeted Ther. 2024;9:30.

Neuroplasticity and Depression (Pt. 2)^{1,2}

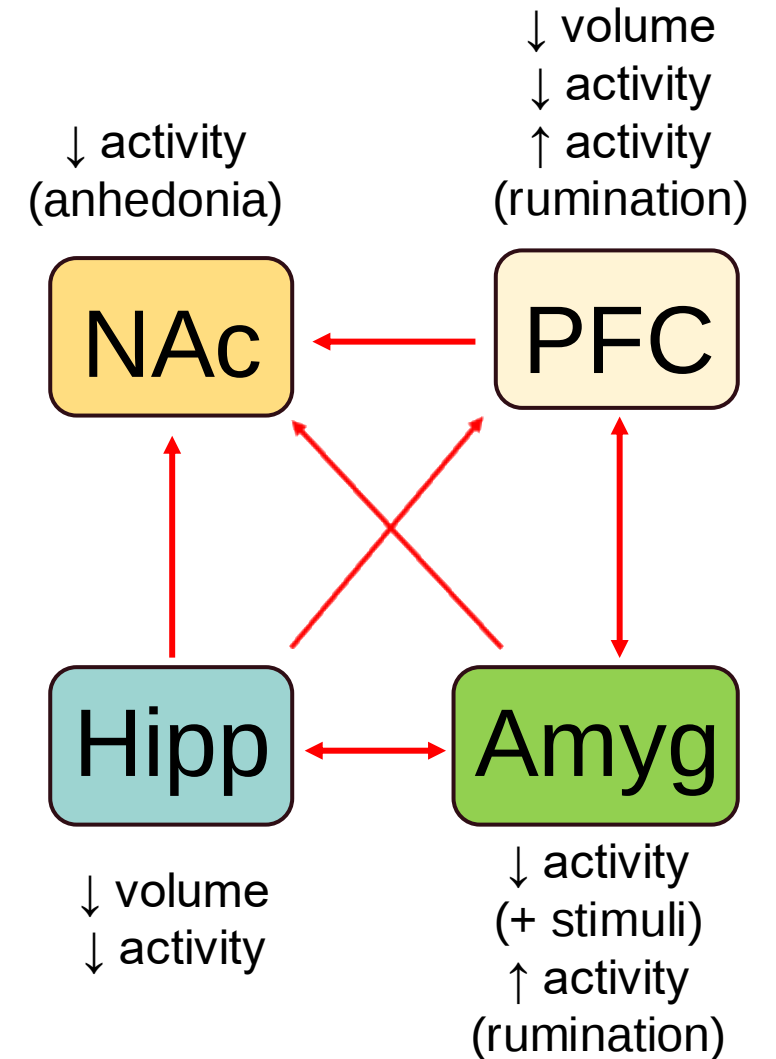
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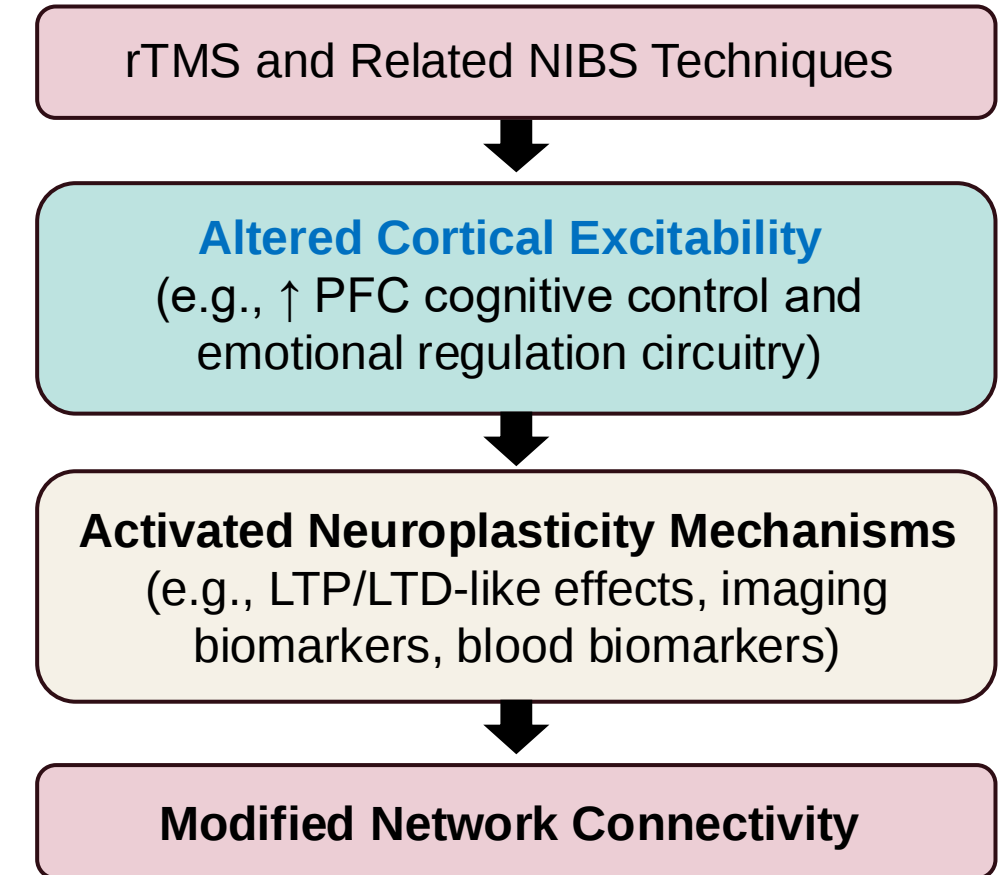
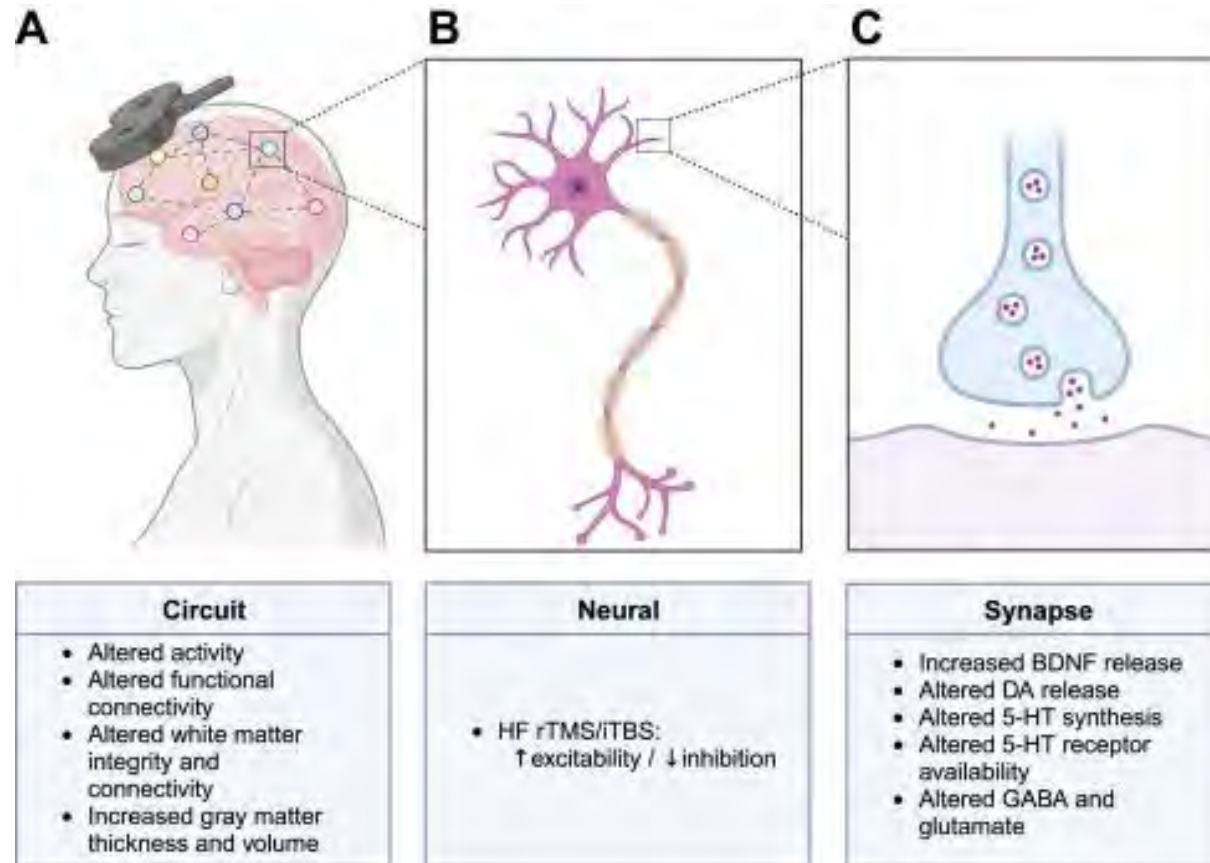
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6



Non-Invasive Brain Stimulation (NIBS), Circuit Excitability, & Plasticity



Rapid-Acting Antidepressants: Rapid Plasticity Activators

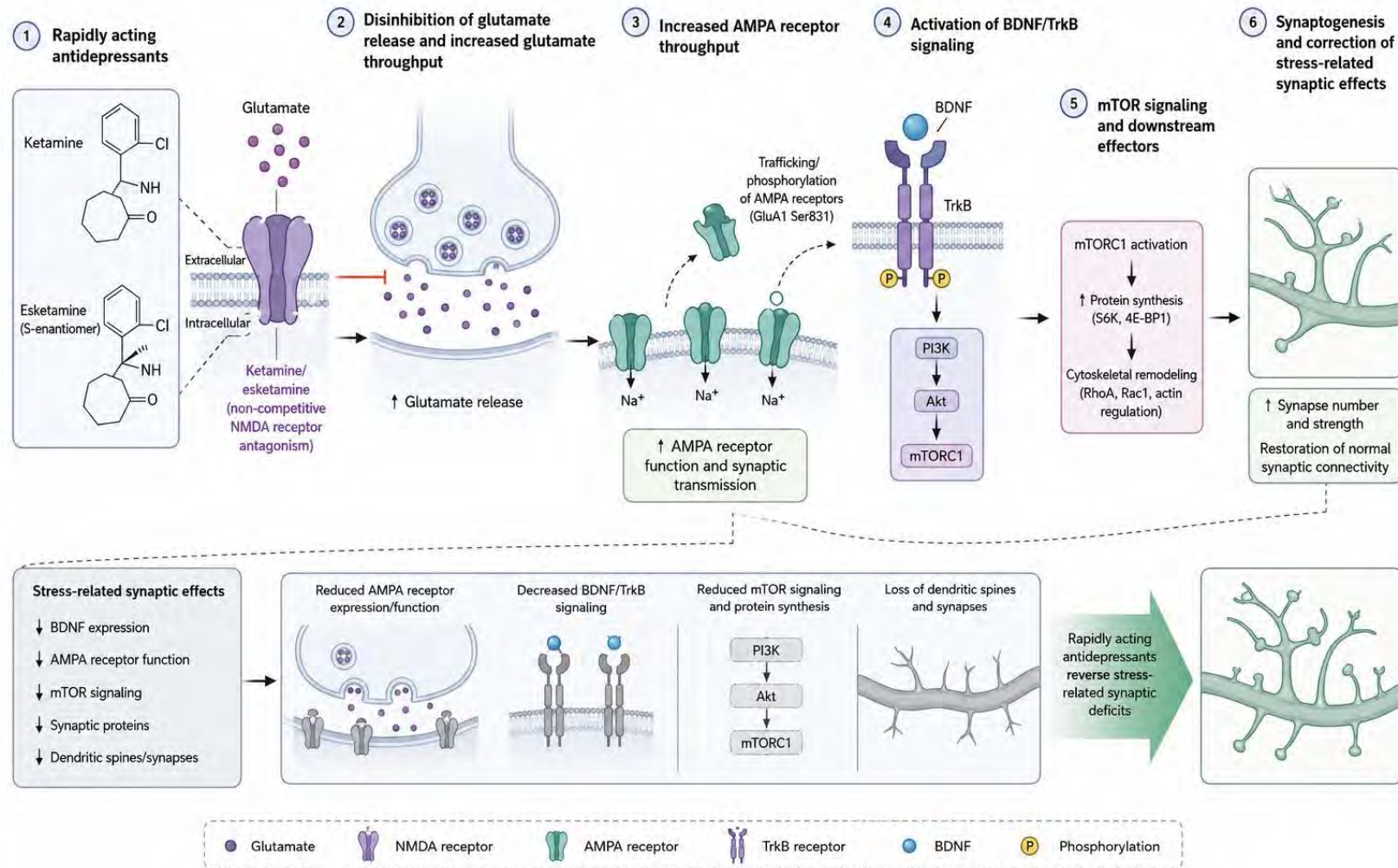
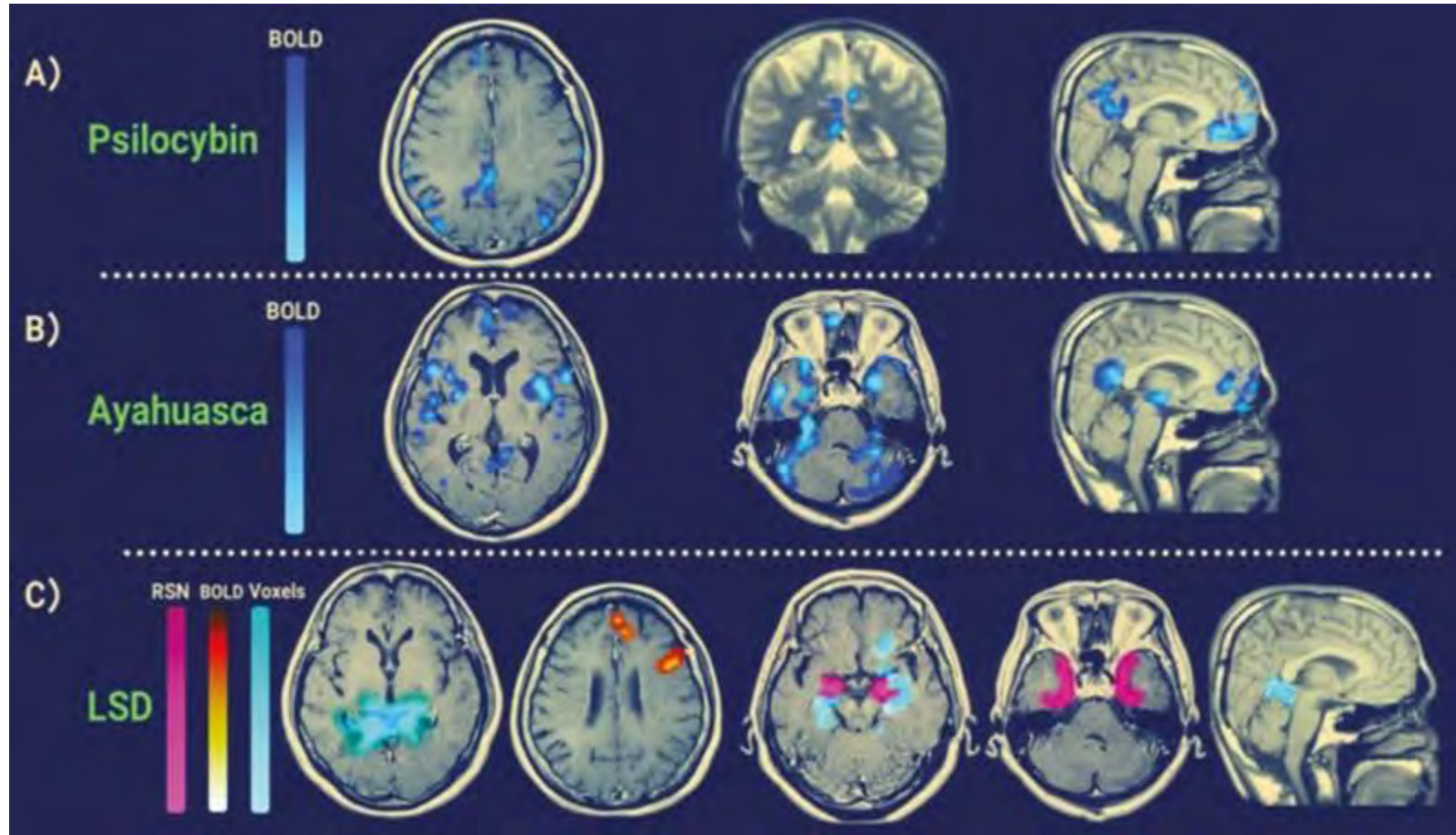


Figure illustration generated with ChatGPT (OpenAI) from author-developed scientific content/prompt; reviewed and edited by the author for accuracy.

McIntyre RS, Jain R. CNS Drugs. 2024;38:869-90; Kang MJY et al. Front Psychiatry. 2022;13:860882.

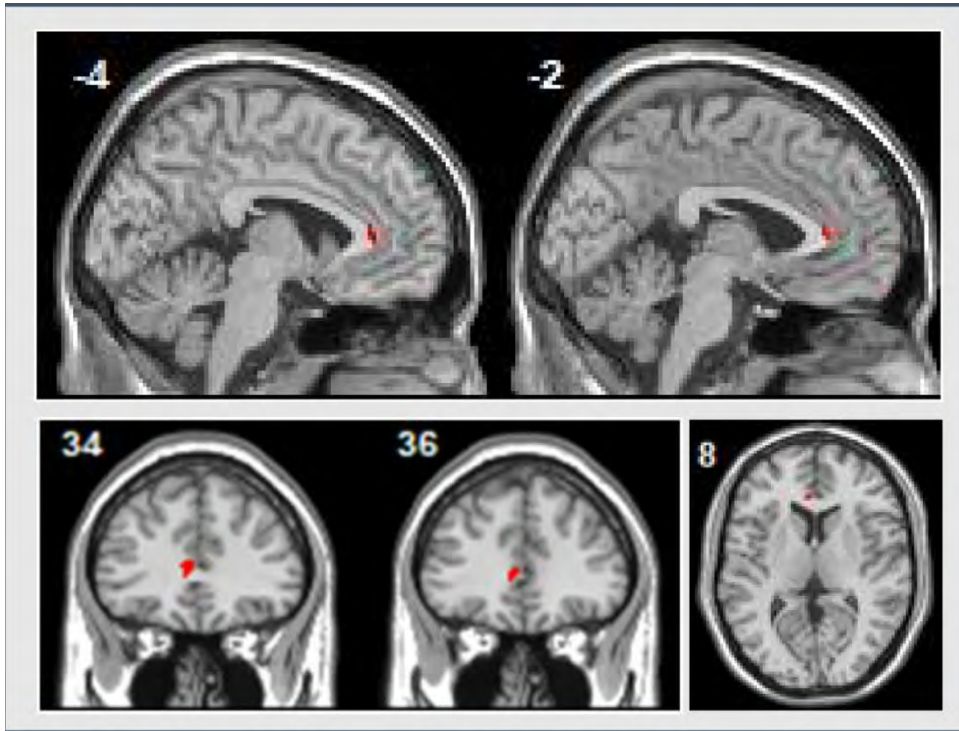
Rapid-Acting Antidepressants: Psychoplastogens

Systematic review of **28 studies** investigating the effects of various serotonergic **psychedelics** (5-HT_{2A} full/partial agonists) on resting state connectivity within **Default Mode Network (DMN)** and functional connectivity between canonical resting-state networks



Psychological Treatment, New Learning, & Plasticity¹⁻³

Systematic review (17 studies pre-post studies, 4 subjected to meta-analysis)
Imaging biomarkers for MDD patients who received CBT (9 studies), BA (2 studies), IPT (2 studies), or long-term psychodynamic psychotherapy (4 studies)



LEFT: Patients with MDD showed increased rACC activation, while healthy controls showed decreased activation (group x time interaction, $p < 0.05$ FDR corrected).

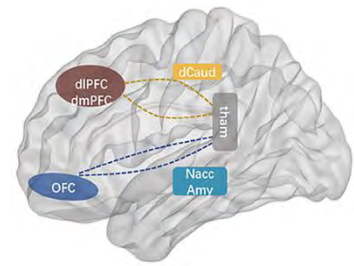
ABOVE: Main effect of decreased left precentral gyrus activity following psychotherapy for MDD ($p < 0.05$ FDR corrected).

¹ Sankar A et al. Psychiatry Res Neuroimaging. 2018;279:31-39.

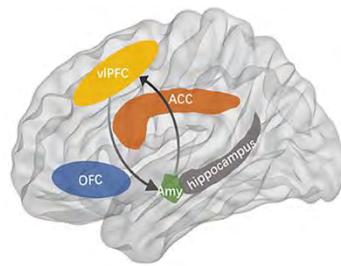
² Konig P et al. J Affect Disord. 2025;368:872-887.

³ Piotrkowicz M et al. J Clin Med. 2021;4424.

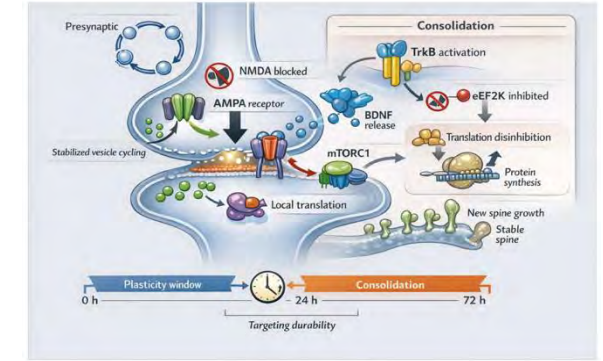
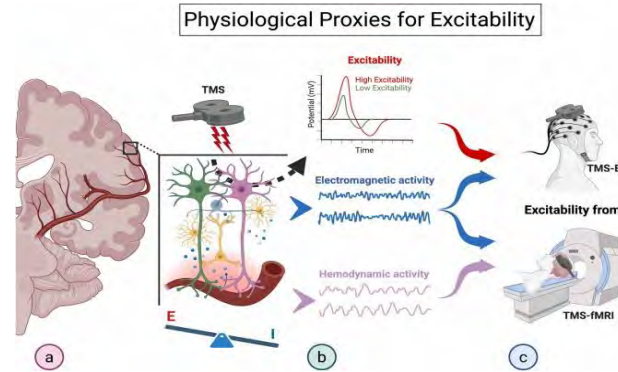
Plasticity Window Concept¹⁻⁶



Dorsal cognitive circuit



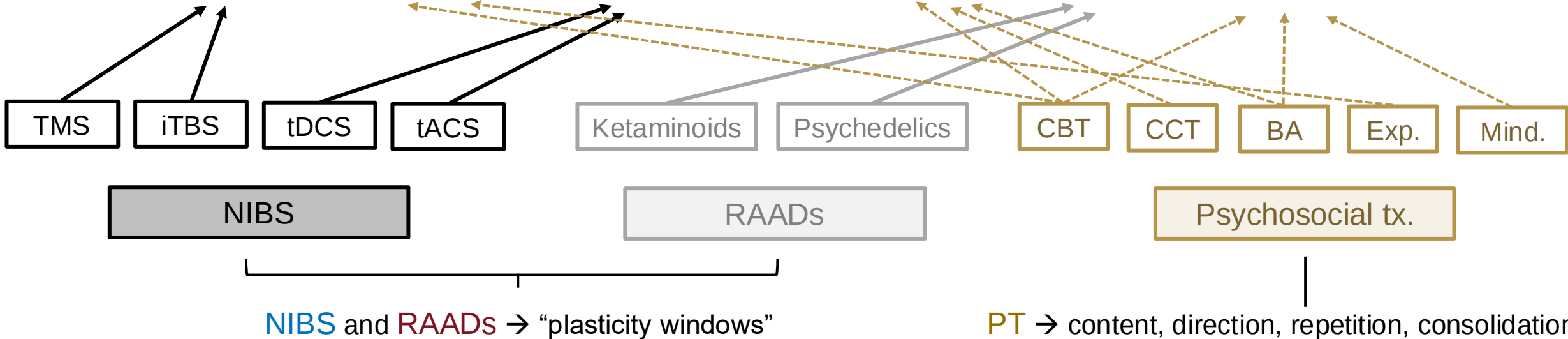
Fronto-limbic circuit



Altered Excitability & Network Connectivity (DLPFC-ACC-limbic)

Modulated Cortical Excitability to Prime Task-Dependent Learning

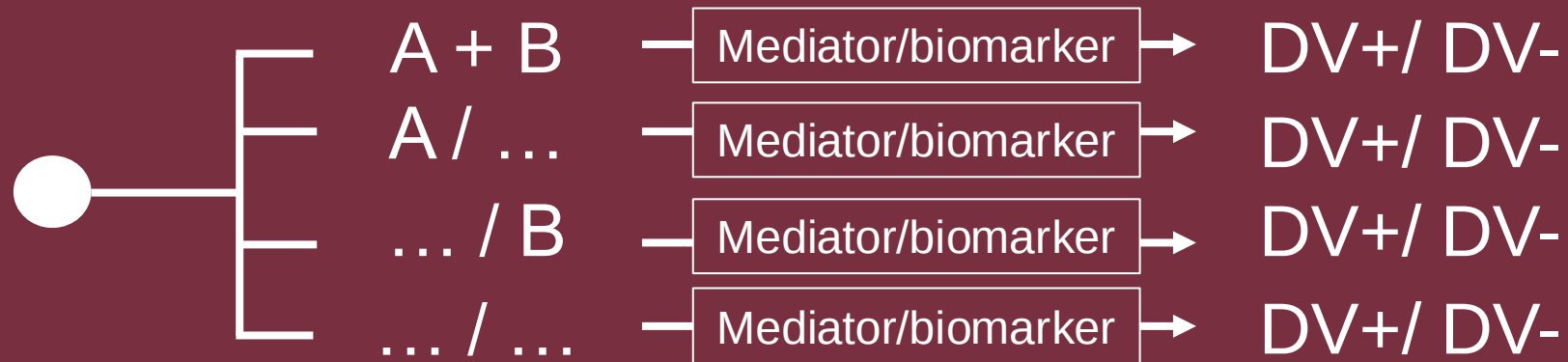
Engagement of Glu, AMPA, BDNF, mTOR-linked plasticity



¹ Bi B et al. Transl Psychiatry. 2022;12:143. ² Shuler A-L et al. Neurosci Biobehav Rev. 2025;177:106338. ³ Tanaka M. Preprints 2026;2026042155. ⁴ Lepow L et al. Front Neurosci. 2021;15:710004. ⁵ Tatti E et al. Neurosci Biobehav Rev. 2022;142:104867. ⁶ Saccenti D et al. Neural Plast. 2024;2024:7853199.

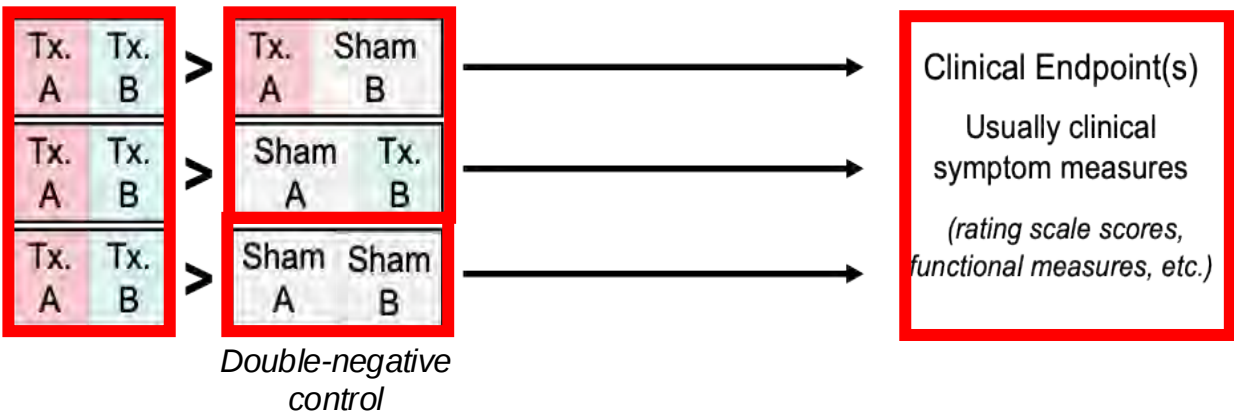
Part 2.

Study Designs Showing Synergy

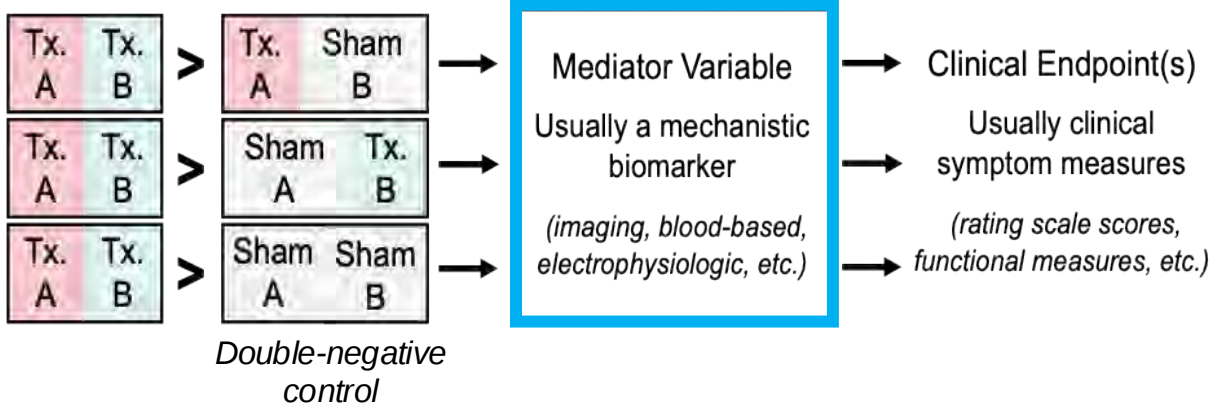


Synergy ≠ Co-Administration, Augmentation, Sequencing

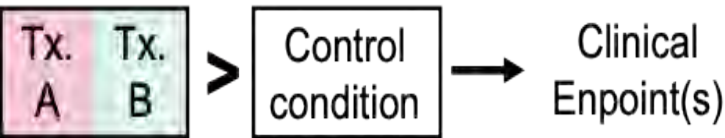
“Clinical synergy”



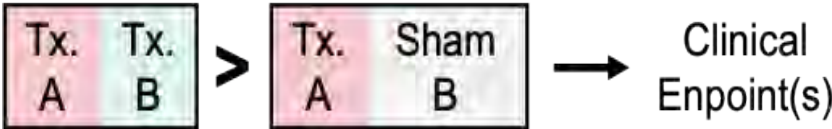
“Mechanistic synergy”



Co-administration



Augmentation



Sequencing

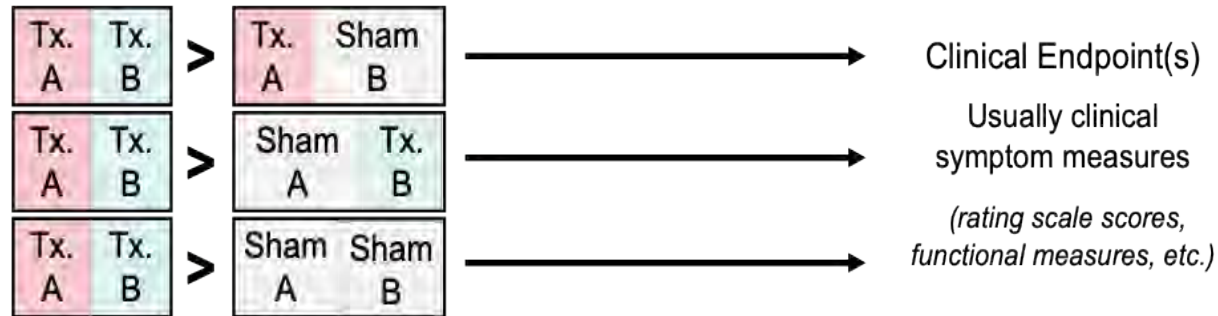


Designs That Show Synergy

Suppose that **Tx. A** is biological (NIBS, RAADs) and **Tx. B** is psychotherapy, that there is true randomization, and that blinding is adequate...

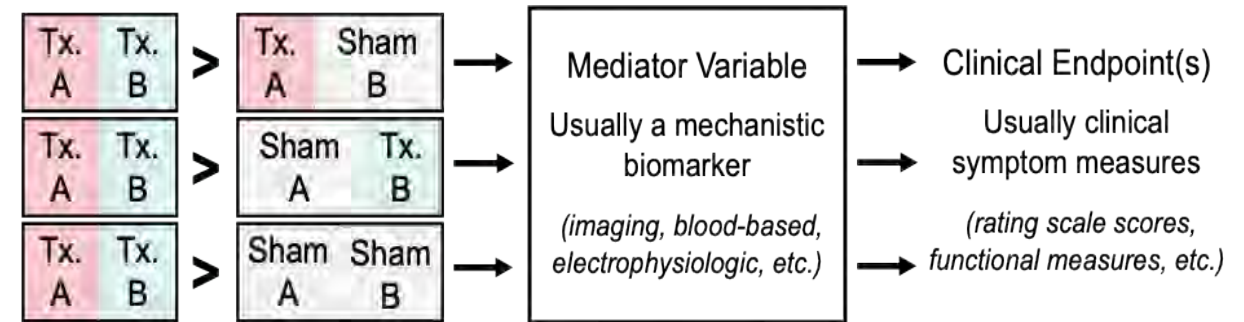
To show synergy, you must demonstrate that...

“Clinical synergy”



...The combined effect of Tx. A and Tx. B exceeds what is expected (observed) from the sum or additive effects of each treatment alone.

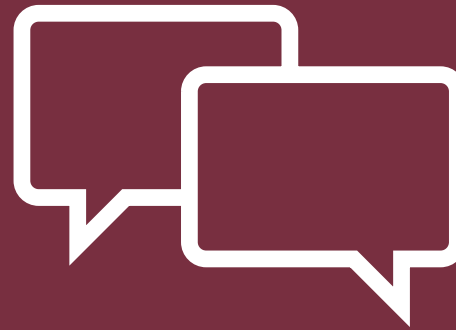
“Mechanistic synergy”



...The combination of Tx. A and Tx. B produces stronger activation of plasticity mechanisms—which mediate the outcomes of interest.

Part 3A.

NIBS + Psychotherapy



NIBS + Psychotherapy: Search Strategy

- NIBS:

- **Include:** TMS, rTMS, TBS, iTBS/cTBS, tDCS
- **Exclude:** ECT, VNS, DBS, MST

- Psychotherapy:

- **Include:** Evidence-based psychotherapy, supportive therapy/psychological support, coaching

MeSH Terms	TIAB terms
"Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation" "Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation"	TMS, rTMS, "repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation", "transcranial magnetic stimulation", "theta burst stimulation", TBS, iTBS, cTBS, "intermittent theta burst stimulation", "continuous theta burst stimulation", "accelerated TMS", "accelerated rTMS", "Stanford neuromodulation therapy", SAINT, tDCS, "transcranial direct current stimulation", "direct current stimulation"

MeSH Terms	TIAB terms
"Psychotherapy" "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy" "Behavior Therapy" "Acceptance and Commitment Therapy" "Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy" "Interpersonal Psychotherapy" "Psychotherapy, Brief" "Psychotherapy, Group" "Psychotherapy, Psychodynamic" "Psychosocial Intervention" "Counseling" "Motivational Interviewing" "Therapeutic Alliance"	psychotherap*, "psychological treatment*", "psychological therap*", "talk therap*", "evidence-based psychotherap*", "evidence based psychotherap*", CBT, "cognitive behavioral therap*", "cognitive behavioural therap*", "behavioral activation", BA, ACT, "acceptance and commitment therap*", MBCT, "mindfulness-based cognitive therap*", "mindfulness based cognitive therap*", IPT, "interpersonal psychotherap*", "psychodynamic therap*", "brief psychotherap*", "group psychotherap*", "supportive therap*", "supportive psychotherap*", "supportive counseling", "psychological support", "non-directive support", coach*, "behavioral coaching", "health coaching", "wellness coaching", "recovery coaching", "therapeutic coaching"

tDCS Augmentation of CBT for Major Depression

Multicenter randomized, 3-arm trial, 148 adults with MDD

Aust S et al. JAMA Psychiatry. 2022;79:528-537.

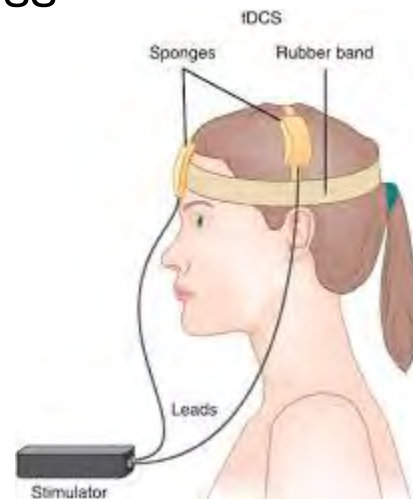
Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation:

- 1-2 mA current used to adjust resting state → more or less excitable
- Anode → (L) DLPFC

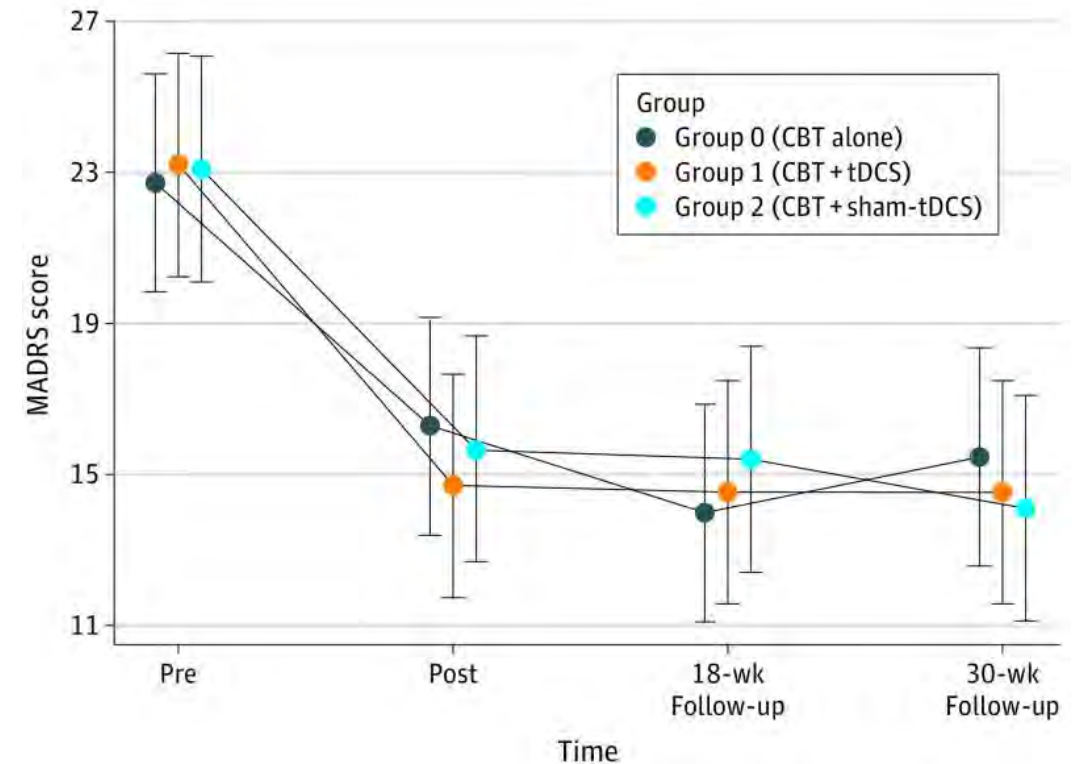
Study Design:

Randomized to 1 of 3 arms:

- tDCS + CBT
- Sham tDCS + CBT
- CBT alone



Main Results:



Does tDCS enhance CBT?

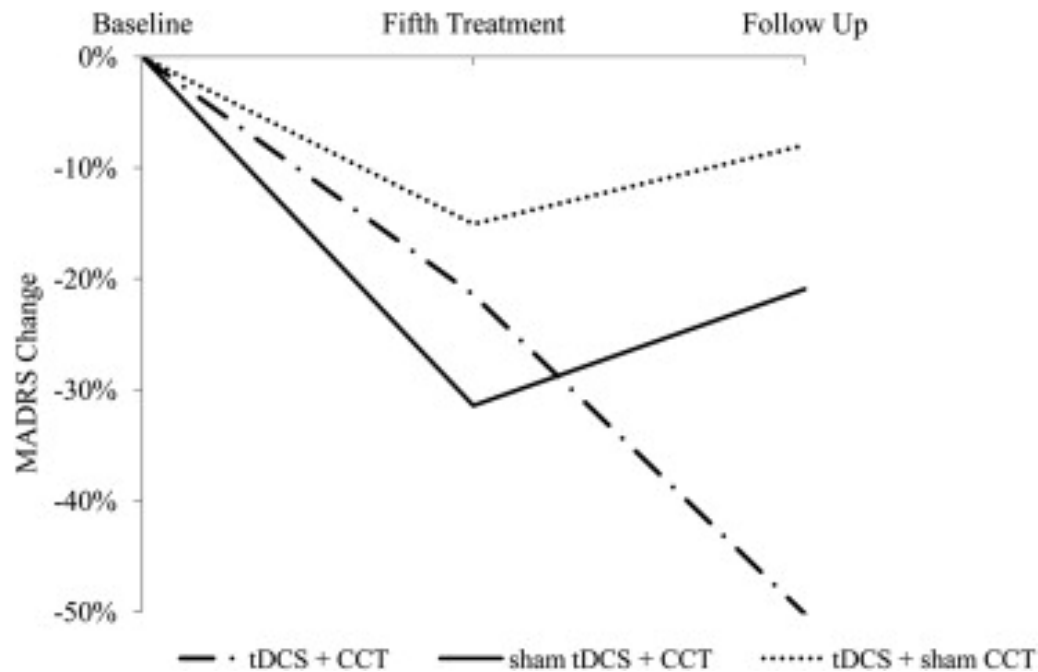
Concurrent tDCS & Cognitive Control Training for Depression

Randomized Three-Arm Mechanistic Pilot Trial

27 patients with MDD randomized to tDCS + CCT, sham tDCS + CCT, or tDCS + sham CCT

CCT and PFC stimulation are thought to converge on DLPFC-mediated cognitive system functioning

Change in MADRS total scores over time



Modulation of DLPFC-mediated cognitive control

Assessed using the two-back working memory task (matched affective and non-affective versions)

Summary of Results

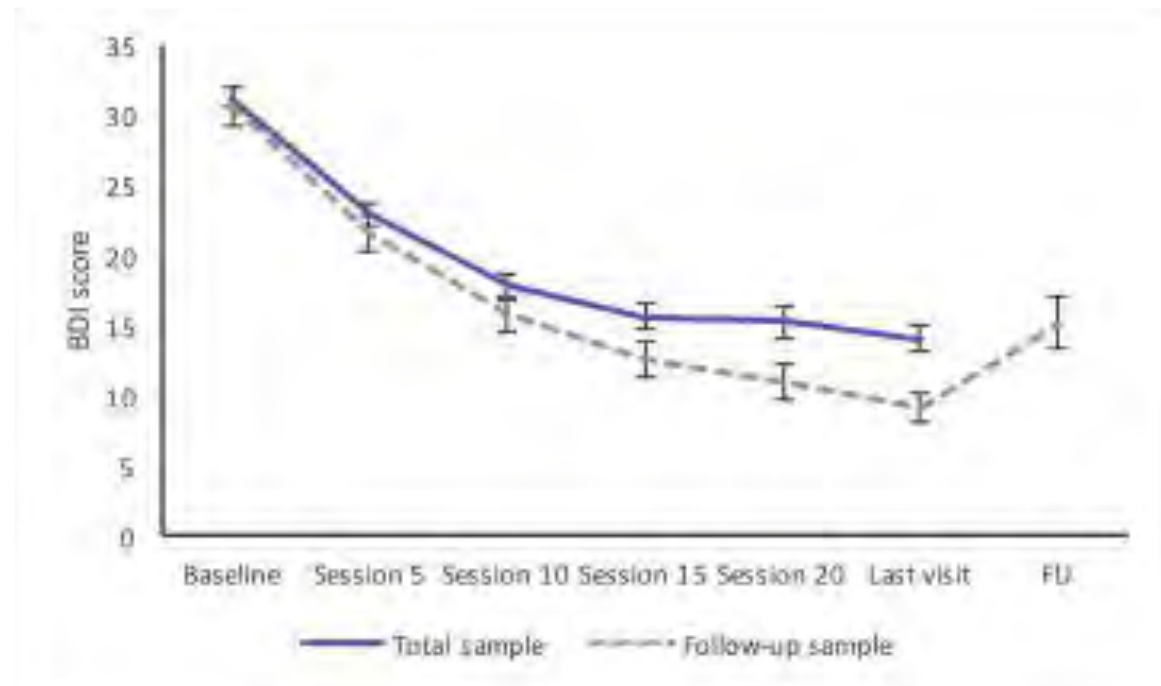
All three groups showed reduction in MADRS scores through 5 treatments and at 3-week follow-up, but **only tDCS + CCT showed sustained response at follow-up.**

Five sessions of tDCS + CCT resulted in **increased accuracy on the negative 2-back test** at follow-up, which was associated with reduced MADRS scores

Simultaneous TMS & Psychotherapy for MDD

Naturalistic Study – Is simultaneous TMS and PT feasible?

196 patients with MDD were given 20+ sessions of TMS + PT simultaneously
TMS was delivered at 10 Hz (L) or 1 Hz (R); PT was based on CBT principles
BDI was assessed at each 5th treatment (until end of treatment) and at 6-month follow-up



Concurrent TMS & Unguided Digital CBT for TRD

6-week, Two-Arm Randomized Trial of TMS +/- iCBT

78 patients with TR-MDD were randomized to TMS + iCBT or TMS alone

iCBT (MoodGYM) – 5 modules – relationship between thoughts/emotions, cognitive distortions/negative thoughts, assertiveness/self-esteem training, BA, problem solving

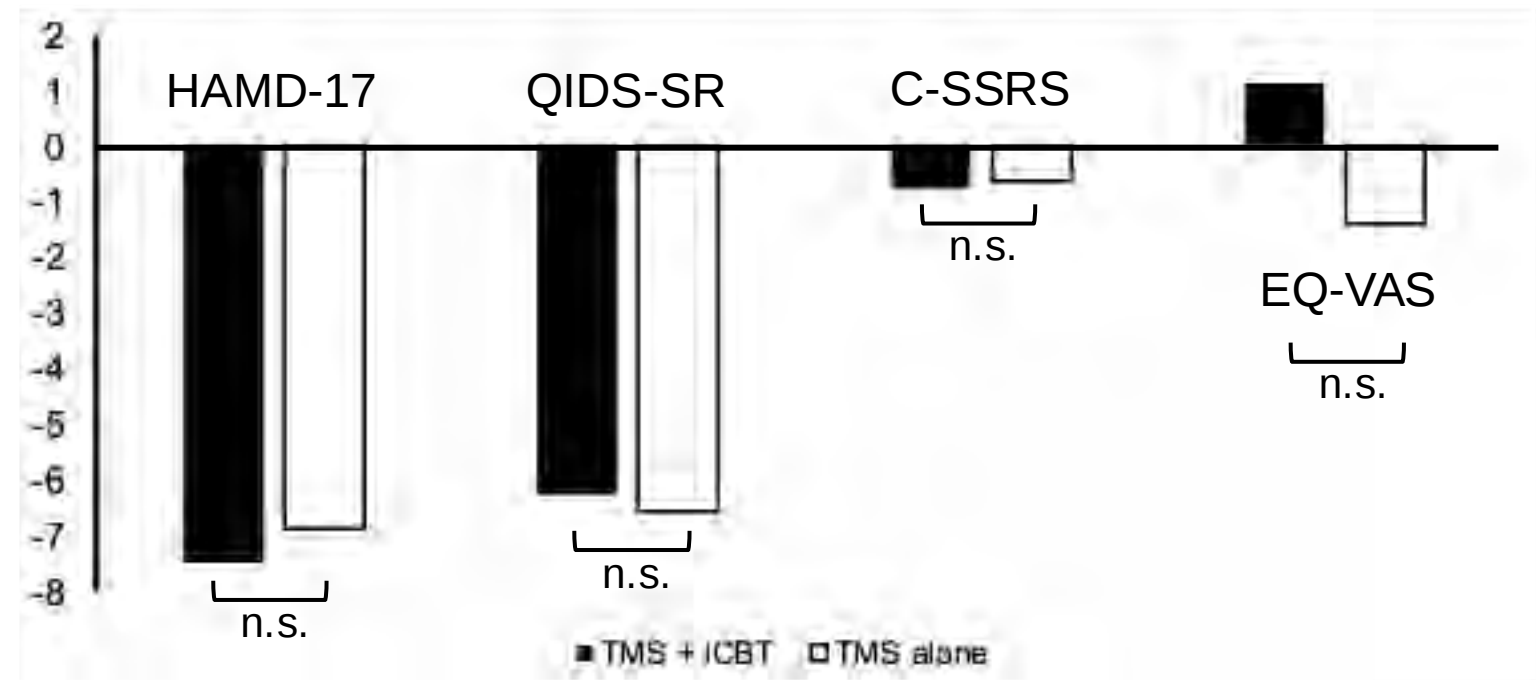
Participants instructed to complete 1-hr sessions on evening before/morning of TMS

Outcome Measures

Psychopathology
(depression) -- [HAMD-17](#),
[QIDS-SR](#)

Suicidal ideations – [C-SSRS](#)
(screen version)

Health status – [EQ-VAS](#)



Behavioral Activation During TMS for MDD

Chart review study of BA administered during course of TMS

TMS was given over a standard course of 6 weeks

BA protocol was adapted for TMS sessions and was delivered by trained physicians & nurses

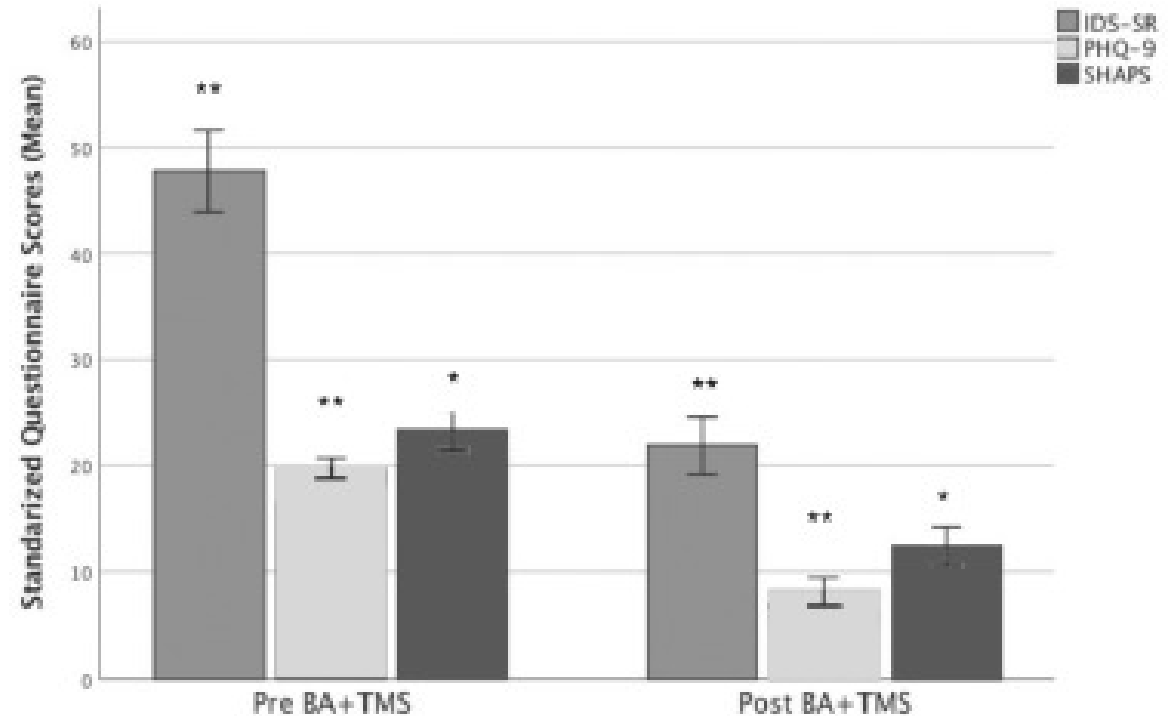
BA goal setting, review of BA progress, & discussion of obstacles occurred during stimulation

Outcome measures

IDS-SR, PHQ-9, SHAPS

Main results

Six (55%) met criteria for positive treatment response; average improvement clinical ratings was 47% for **IDS**, 55% for **PHQ-9**, and 39% for **SHAPS**; 77% of subjects completed or exceeded **therapeutic goal(s)**



Russo GB et al. J Affect Disord. 2018;236:101-104.

Part 3B.

RAADs + Psychotherapy



RAADs + Psychotherapy: Search Strategy

- RAADs:

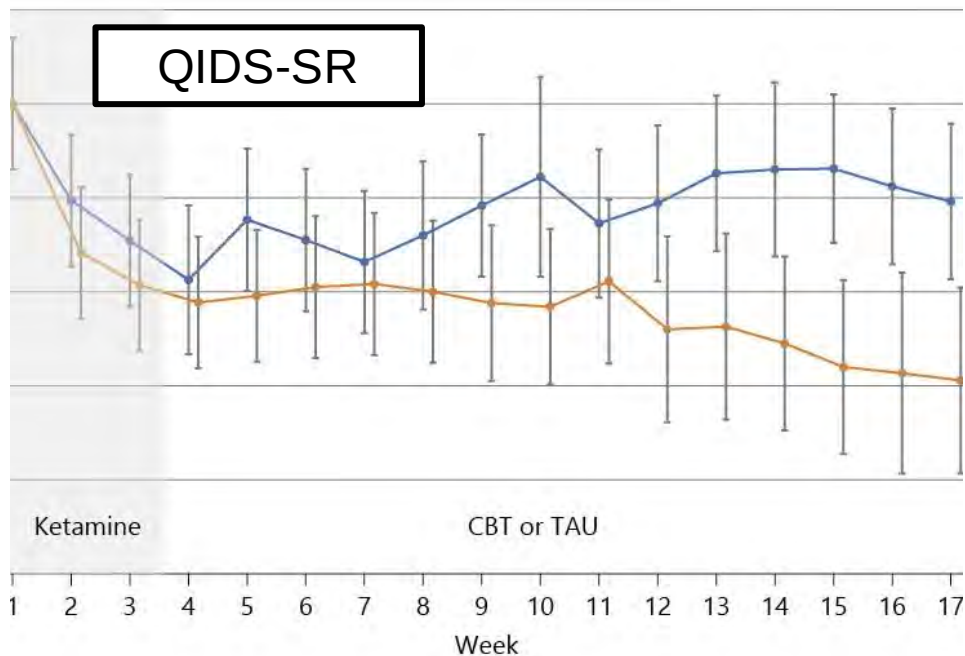
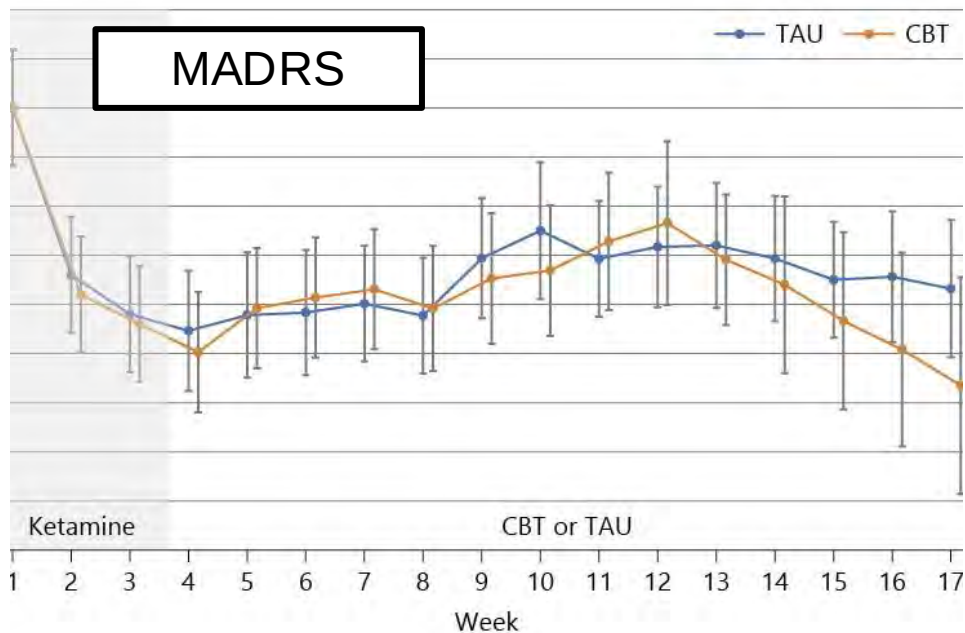
- **Include:** TMS, rTMS, TBS, iTBS/cTBS, tDCS
- **Exclude:** ECT, VNS, DBS, MST

- Psychotherapy:

- **Include:** Evidence-based psychotherapy, supportive therapy/psychological support, coaching

MeSH Terms	TIAB terms
"Ketamine" "Hallucinogens" "Psilocybin" "Lysergic Acid Diethylamide" "N,N-Dimethyltryptamine"	ketamine, esketamine, arketamine, Spravato, "rapid-acting antidepressant*", "rapid acting antidepressant*", RAAD, NMDA, psychedelic*, hallucinogen*, psychoplastogen*, "psychedelic-assisted", "psychedelic assisted", "psilocybin-assisted", "psilocybin assisted", psilocybin, psilocin, LSD, "lysergic acid diethylamide", DMT, "N,N-dimethyltryptamine", ayahuasca, mescaline, MDMA, "3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine"

MeSH Terms	TIAB terms
"Psychotherapy" "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy" "Behavior Therapy" "Acceptance and Commitment Therapy" "Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy" "Interpersonal Psychotherapy" "Psychotherapy, Brief" "Psychotherapy, Group" "Psychotherapy, Psychodynamic" "Psychosocial Intervention" "Counseling" "Motivational Interviewing" "Therapeutic Alliance"	psychotherap*, "psychological treatment*", "psychological therap*", "talk therap*", "evidence-based psychotherap*", "evidence based psychotherap*", CBT, "cognitive behavioral therap*", "cognitive behavioural therap*", "behavioral activation", BA, ACT, "acceptance and commitment therap*", MBCT, "mindfulness-based cognitive therap*", "mindfulness based cognitive therap*", IPT, "interpersonal psychotherap*", "psychodynamic therap*", "brief psychotherap*", "group psychotherap*", "supportive therap*", "supportive psychotherap*", "supportive counseling", "psychological support", "non-directive support", coach*, "behavioral coaching", "health coaching", "wellness coaching", "recovery coaching", "therapeutic coaching"



CBT for Sustaining Acute Ketamine Effects in Patients with TRD

Randomized proof-of-concept study

28 patients with TRD responded after 6 IV infusions of KET over 3 weeks and were then randomized to either cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or treatment as usual (weekly/biweekly medication management)

Summary of Results

Significant group x time interaction effect favoring CBT over 14 weeks for **QIDS*** ($F=4.58$, $p=0.03$, Cohen's d 0.71 [-0.30, 1.70]) but not **MADRS**

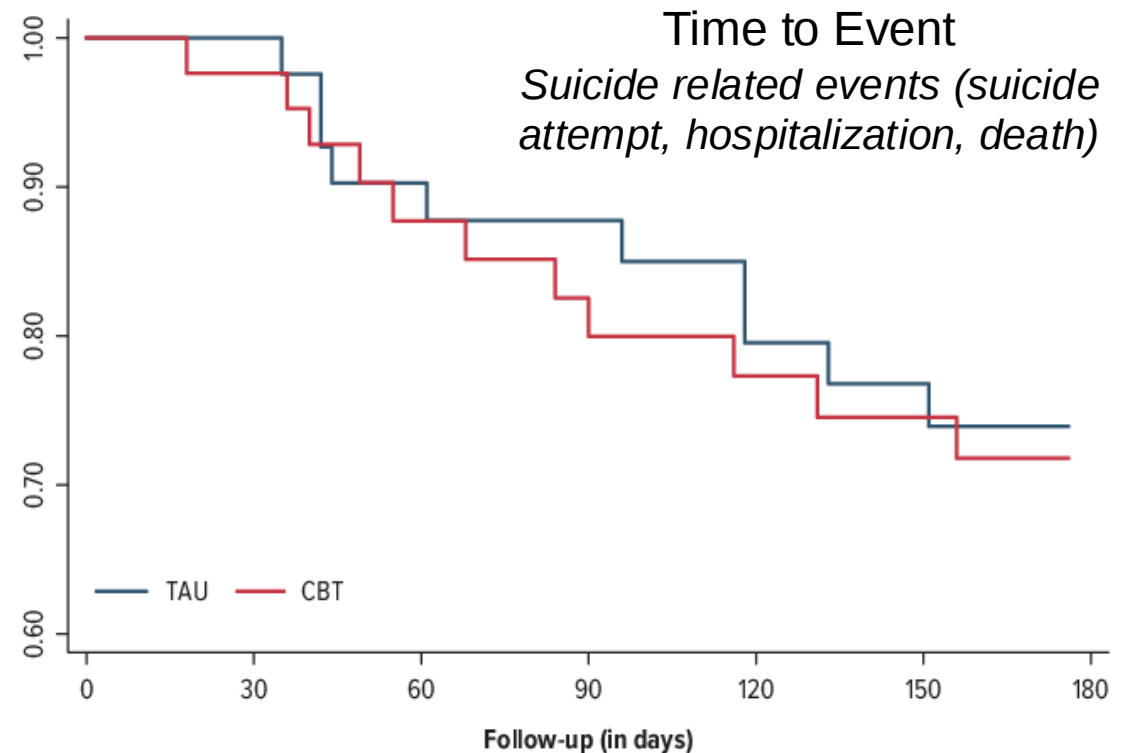
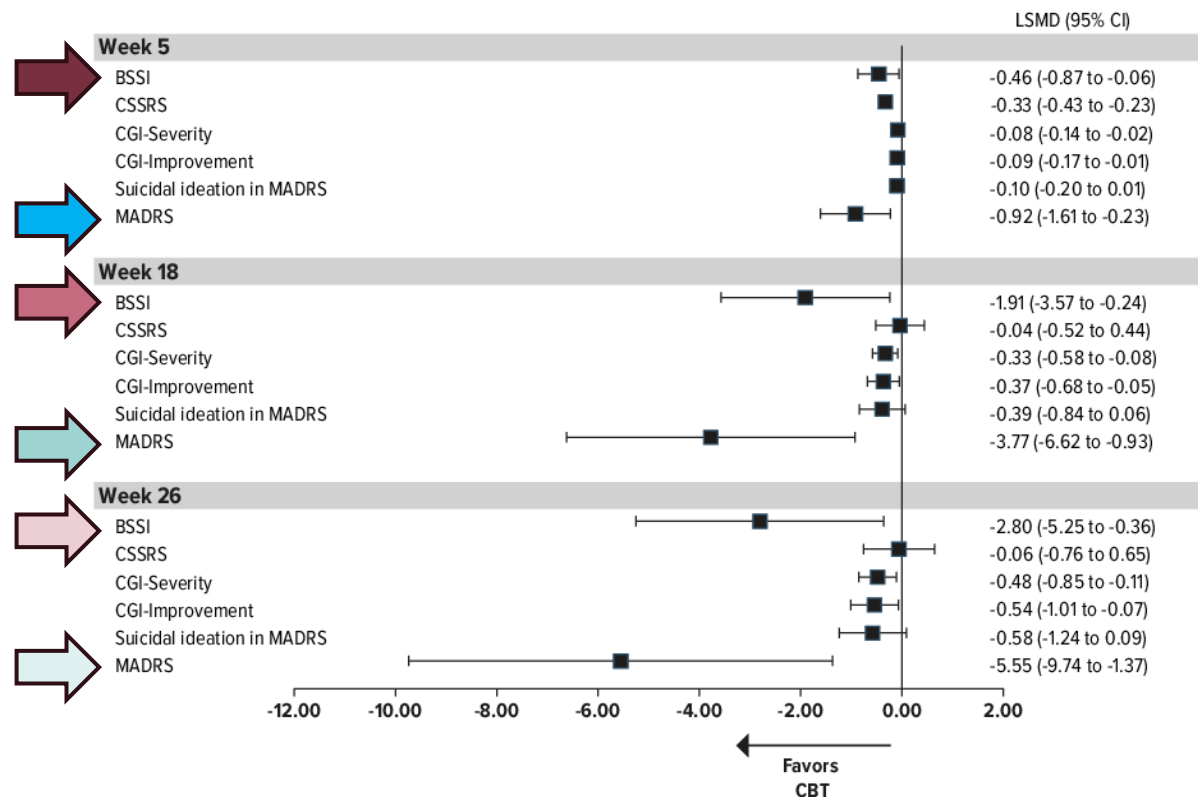
Ketamine responders showed improvement in tests of **cognitive flexibility*** (emotional N-back, $t[8]=2.33$, $p<0.05$) and **cognitive control** (n.s.)

CBT Following Esketamine Treatment in MDSI

The CBT-ENDURE Randomized Trial

Randomized, rater-blinded feasibility trial (93 randomized subjects with MDSI)

Patients received ESK plus CBT or ESK plus treatment as usual



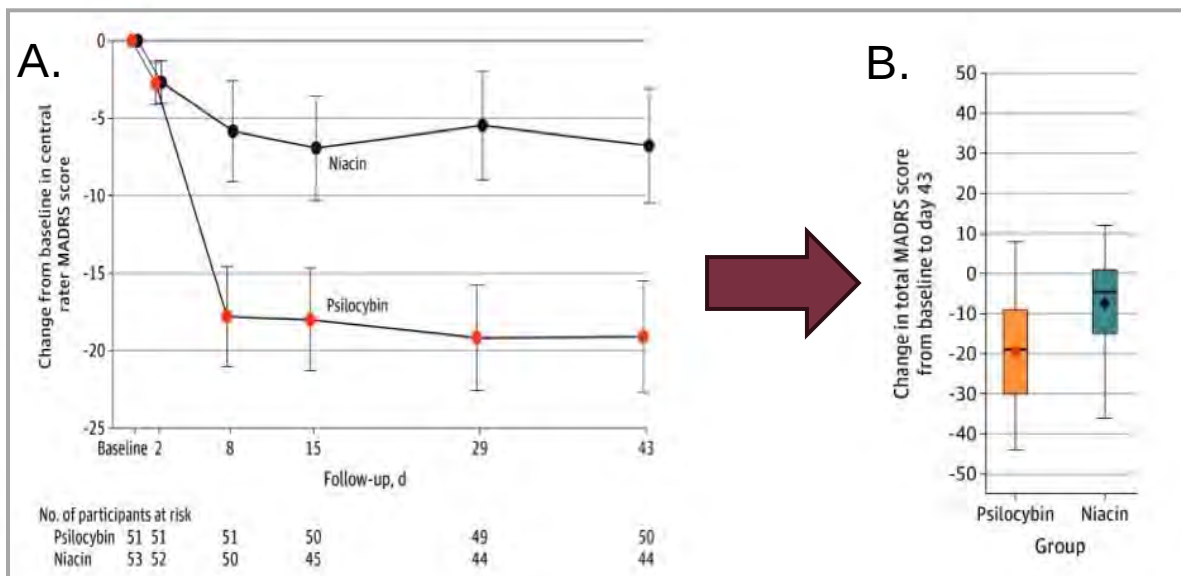
Psilocybin + Psychological Support for MDD & TRD

Two-Arm, Phase 2, Randomized, Niacin-Controlled Trial

104 subjects with DSM-5 MDD

Patients received psilocybin 25 mg or niacin 100 mg with psychosocial support and integration sessions

Primary outcome – 43-day change in MADRS



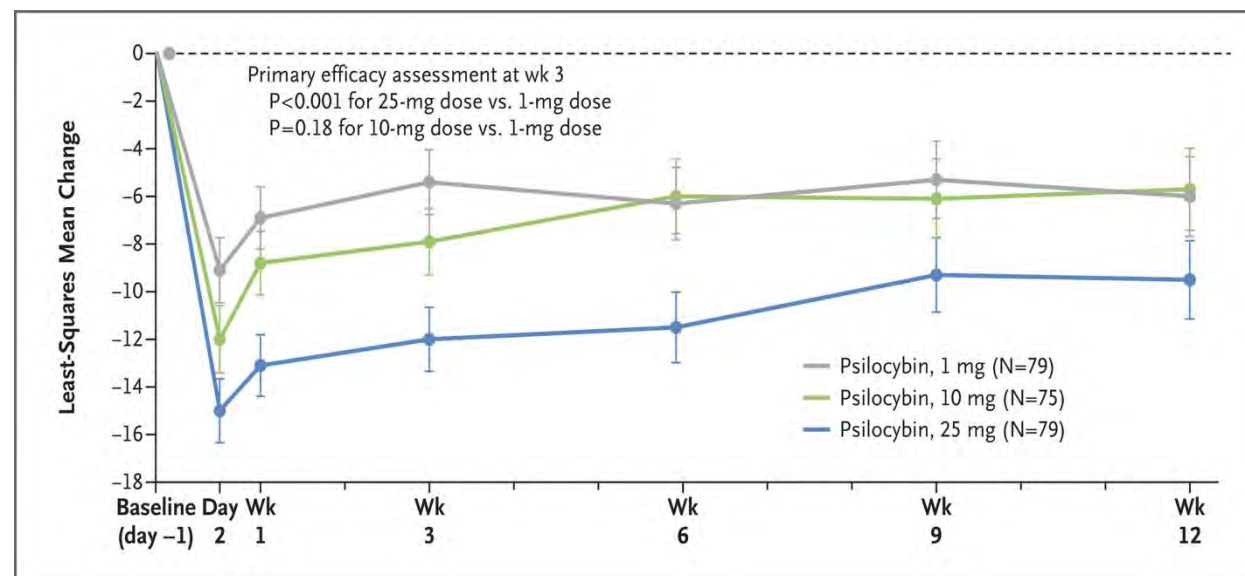
Raison CL et al. JAMA. 2023;330:843-853.

Three-Arm, Phase 2, Randomized Controlled Trial

233 subjects with DSM-5 MDD (TRD)

Patients received psilocybin 25-, 10- or 1 mg with psychosocial support and integration sessions

Primary outcome – 3 wk. change in MADRS



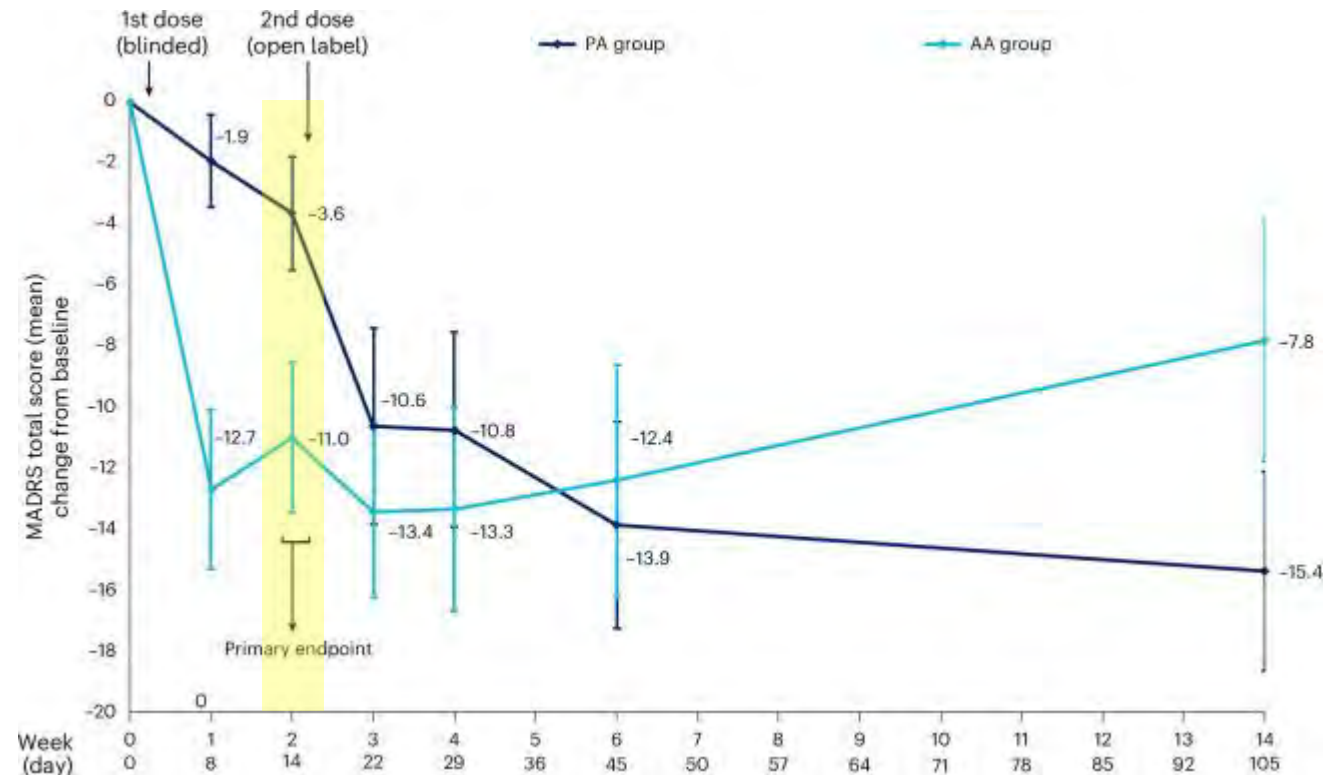
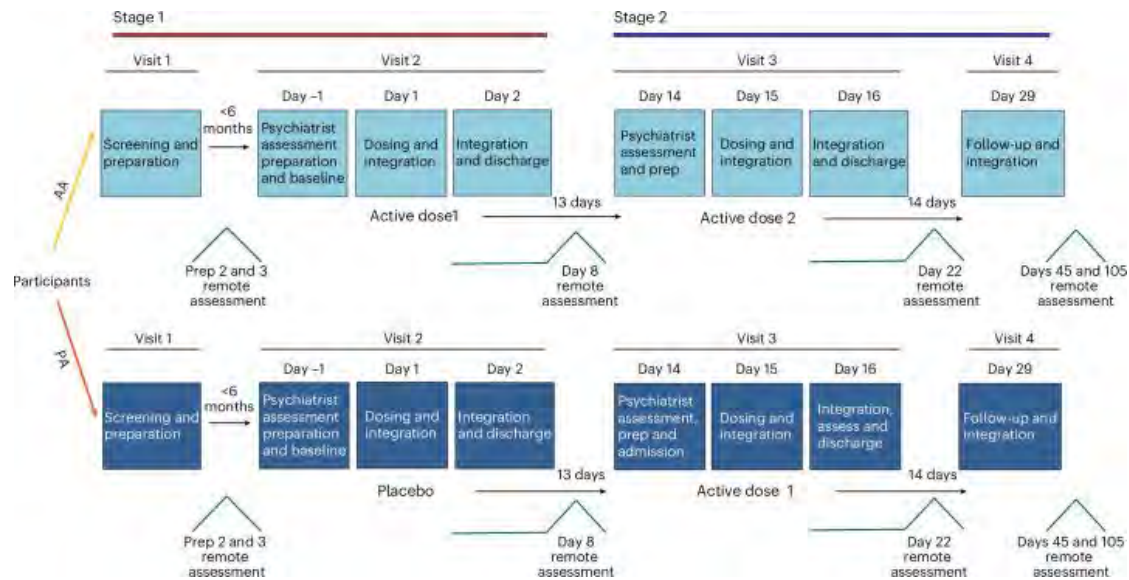
Goodwin GM et al. N Engl J Med. 2022;387:1637-1648.

Dimethyltryptamine-Assisted Psychotherapy/Support for Treatment-Resistant Major Depression

Two-Arm, Phase 2a, Randomized, Niacin-Controlled Trial

34 subjects with moderate to severe TRD (2 failed trials)

Patients received IV DMT 21.5 mg or IV PLC + “supportive psychotherapeutic support”



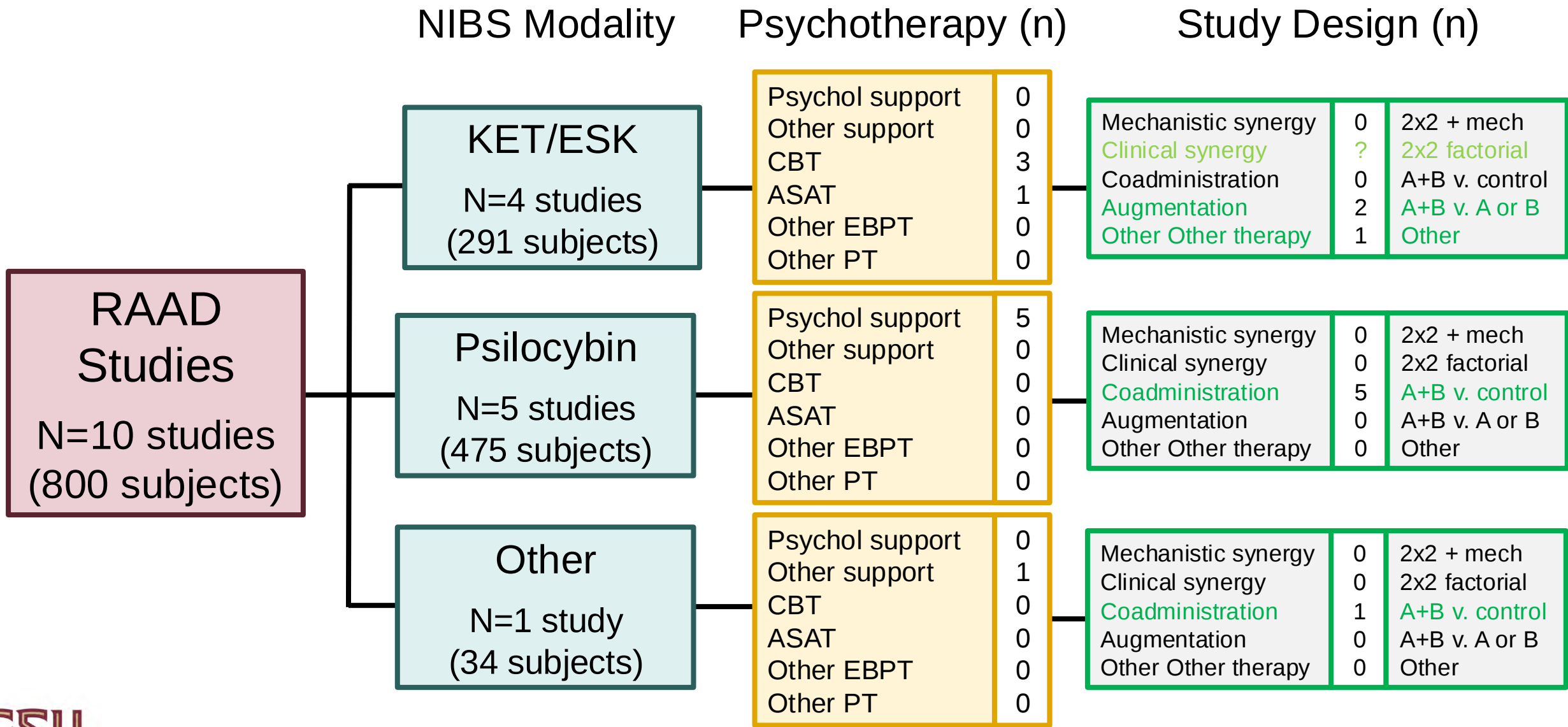
Comparative Evidence: NIBS + Psychosocial Treatment

NIBS Modality Psychotherapy (n) Study Design (n)

NIBS Studies
N=12 studies
(728 subjects)

TMS N=4 studies (386 subjects)	Traditional CBT	0	Mechanistic synergy	0	2x2 + mech
	iCBT/digital CBT	2	Clinical synergy	0	2x2 factorial
	ACT	0	Coadministration	0	A+B v. control
tDCS N=7 studies (326 subjects)	CCT	0	Augmentation	2	A+B v. A or B
	Other EBPT	1	Other Other therapy	2	Other
	Other therapy	1			
Other N=1 study (16 subjects)	Traditional CBT	0	Mechanistic synergy	0	2x2 + mech
	iCBT/digital CBT	0	Clinical synergy	0	2x2 factorial
	ACT	1	Coadministration	0	A+B v. control
	CCT	0	Augmentation	1	A+B v. A or B
	Other EBPT	0	Other Other therapy	0	Other
	Other therapy	0			

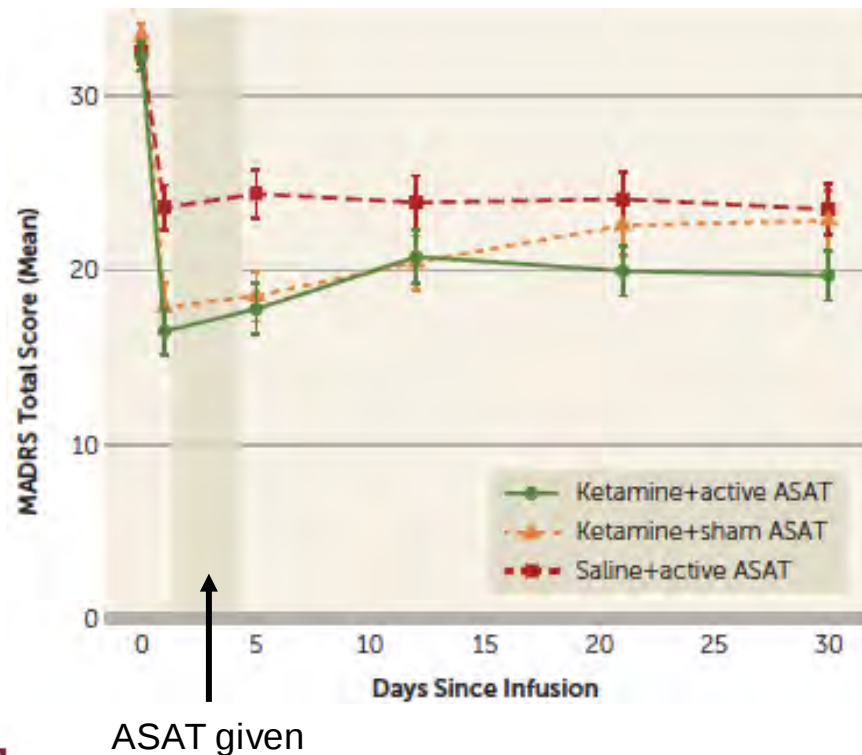
Comparative Evidence: RAADs + Psychosocial Treatment



Automated Self-Association Training (ASAT) for Extending Acute Antidepressive Effects of Ketamine

Two-Arm, Randomized, Double-Blind Trial

154 subjects with moderate to severe MDD and lower-than-normative self-esteem
Patients received IV KET + ASAT, KET + sham-ASAT, or IV PLC + ASAT



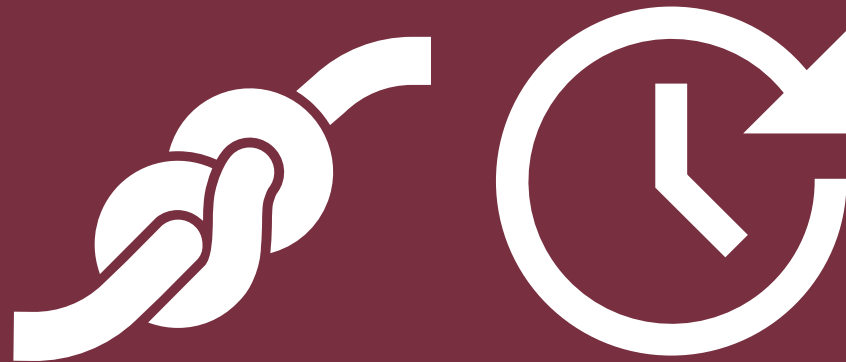
Automated Self-Association Training (ASAT)
Computerized cognitive training program that pairs self-relevant stimuli (photo, self-related words) with positive cues/positive words to make positive self-evaluations more automatic.

Main Results

Rapid antidepressive effects from a single KET infusion were sustained with ASAT but not with sham-ASAT; weaker acute antidepressive effects were observed with IV saline PLC + ASAT

Part 4.

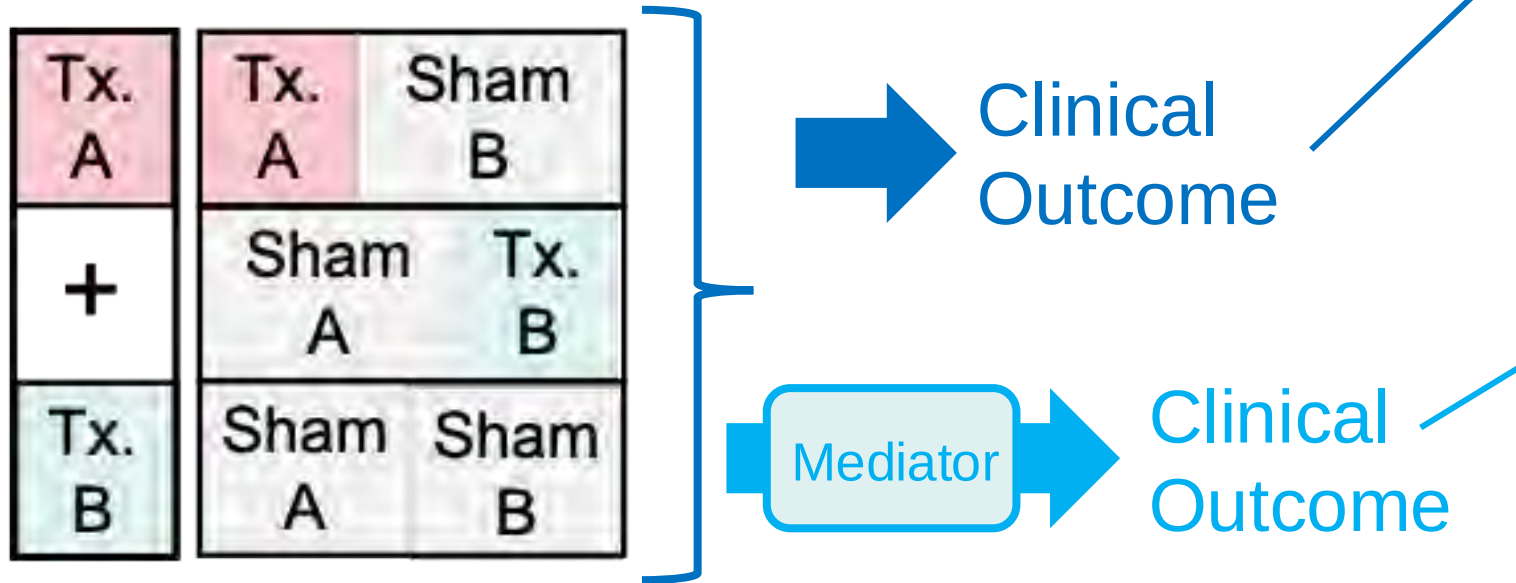
Limitations & Future Directions



Limitations

- ① Few truly factorial designs, so cannot test interactions (e.g., A+B works, but are they truly synergistic?)
- ② Weak isolation of PT contribution (especially for psychedelic trials).
- ③ Expectancy and blinding are often inadequately handled (many studies under review may be functionally unblinded).
- ④ Insufficient mechanistic investigation (e.g., few studies with a priori plasticity target tested as mediator, specific effects of psychotherapy not accounted for).
- ⑤ Timing of PT relative to biological therapeutics (especially NIBS) requires testing.
- ⑥ Generalizability limited (small studies, exclusions, academic centers, etc.).

Next-Generation Trials

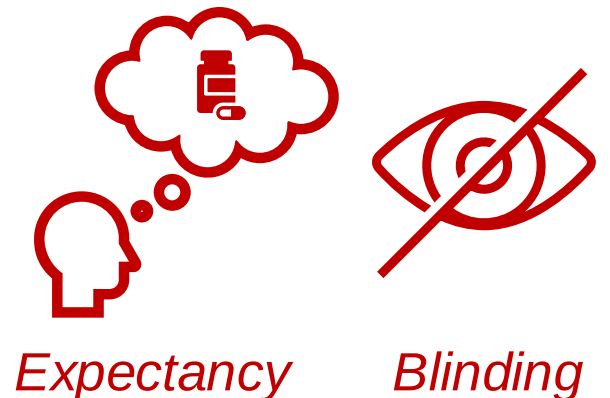
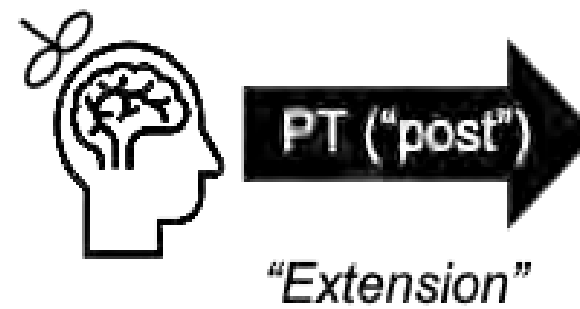
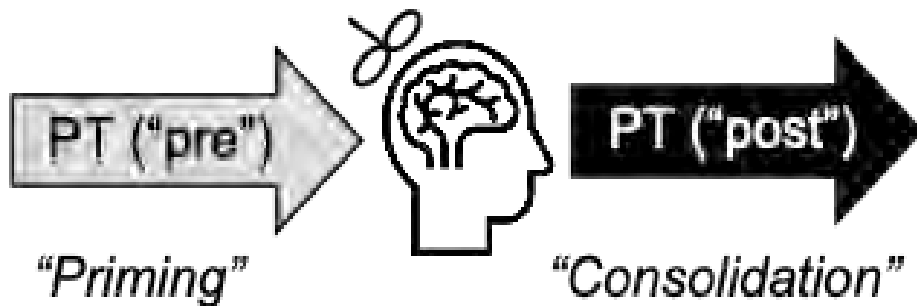


Clinical Outcomes:

- Rating scale scores
- Anhedonia/abnormal reward learning
- High rumination/low cognitive control
- Relapse after rapid response

Clinical Outcomes:

- Biomarkers – reward task fMRI, resting state connectivity, DLPFC striatal connectivity, DMN connectivity, sleep/activity rhythms, etc.
- Psychomarkers – effort-based decision making, rumination/cognitive flexibility, reward learning, emotional/experiential avoidance, etc.



Clinical Implications

- It is reasonable to combine evidence-based neuromodulation and psychosocial treatment on clinical grounds.
- Such decisions should be based on clinical judgment, clinical response patterns and tolerability, patient preference, and other factors within shared decision-making model.
- Mechanistic convergence is biologically plausible but not yet fully established.
- At this stage, neuromodulation and psychosocial treatments can be considered complimentary, but mechanistic synergy is not yet proved.

Broad Summary

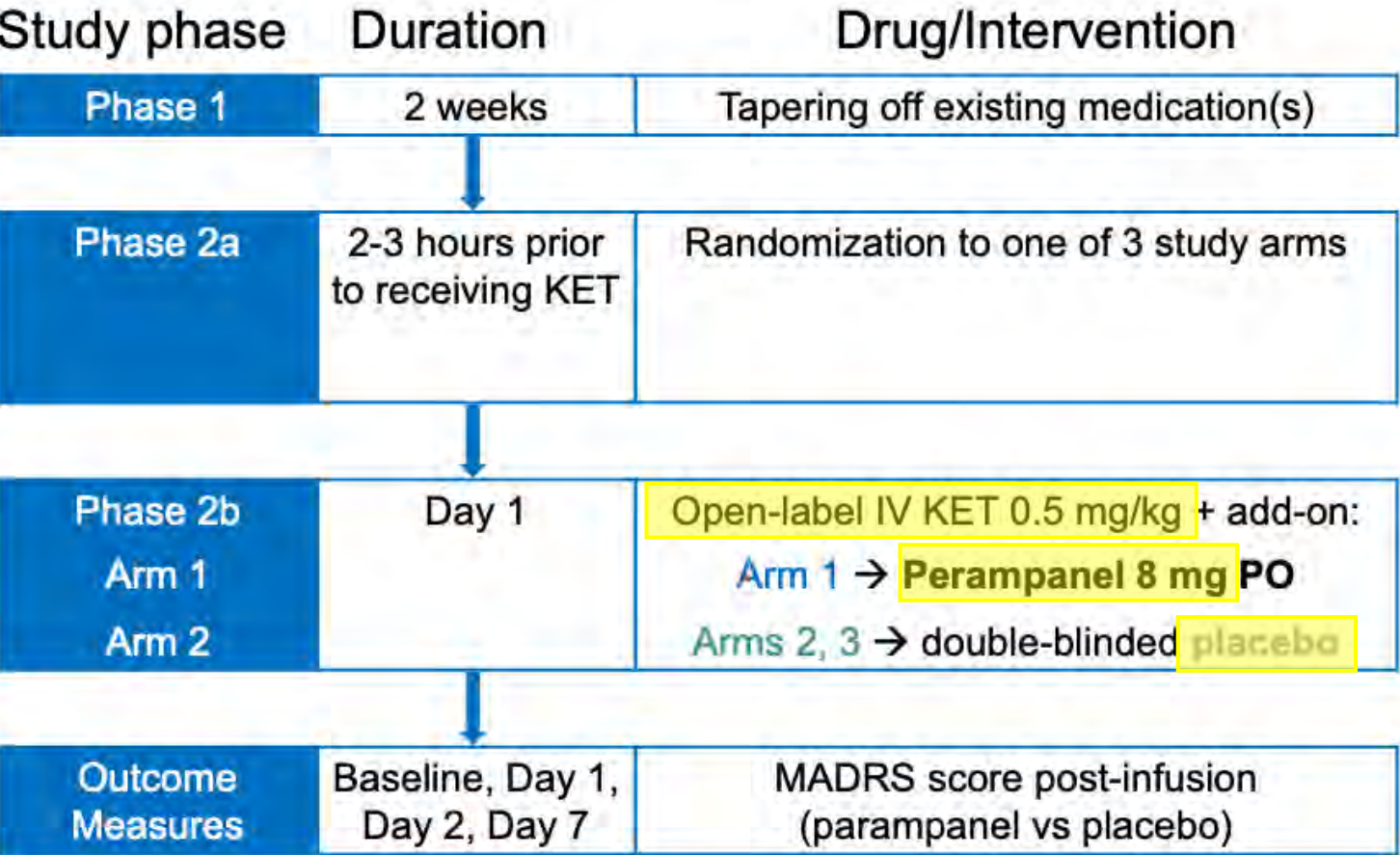
- It is exciting to speculate on how N/M therapeutics can change the brain's readiness to learn.
- It is equally exciting to speculate on how PT can best activate and shape that new learning within a more malleable neurobiological milieu.
- But these narratives are only aspirational based on current evidence.
- Future trials are needed that intentionally test interaction, timing of interventions, target engagement, and mediation.

**Thank you for
your attention!**

Questions?



Mechanism of Action for KET's Antidepressant Effects: The AMPA Throughput Theory in Patients With TRD



Hypotheses:

There will be significantly higher (worse) MADRS scores in the perampanel group than the PLC group by days 1 and 2.

Implications if upheld:

AMPA throughput is necessary for the rapid-onset therapeutic antidepressant activity of IV racemic ketamine.

Biomarkers:

Polysomnogram/EEG, sEEG, TMS, magnetoencephalography

Influence of NIBS Modality, Temporal Alignment of Stimulation/PT, Diagnostic Category, & PT Delivery Method

Systematic review and meta-analysis of 28 randomized trials (1,506 subjects)
All trials included subjects randomized to NIBS (TMS, tDCS) + PT vs. sham NIBS + PT

Category	Label	SMD	Lower CI	Upper CI	Significance
NIBS type	tDCS	-0.20	-0.88	0.47	Not Significant
	rTMS	-0.47	-0.80	-0.13	Significant
Diagnosis	Addiction	-0.08	-0.48	0.33	Not Significant
	Anxiety	-0.70	-1.26	-0.14	Significant
	Depression	-0.39	-1.24	0.47	Not Significant
	OCD	-0.81	-2.10	0.49	Not Significant
	Pain	-0.32	-3.95	3.32	Not Significant
	Personality	-0.47	-1.10	0.17	Not Significant
	PTSD	0.08	-1.30	1.45	Not Significant
	Transdiagnostic	-0.76	-0.84	-0.68	Significant†
Therapy	CBT	-0.48	-0.78	-0.17	Significant
	Exposure	-0.35	-0.94	0.24	Not Significant
	Mindfulness	-0.22	-1.45	1.01	Not Significant
Evidence-based	No	-0.41	-0.90	0.08	Not Significant
	Yes	-0.33	-0.59	-0.07	Significant
Therapy delivery	Computerized	-0.18	-1.87	1.52	Not Significant
	Mixed	-0.28	-0.98	0.43	Not Significant
	Human	-0.50	-0.78	-0.21	Significant
Timing	Not concurrent	-0.56	-0.94	-0.18	Significant
	Concurrent	-0.11	-0.61	0.39	Not Significant