Example of an research abstract

**Title**  
Group Cognitive Processing Therapy: A specialized mental health intervention that supports improvements in well-being for sexual violence survivors

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**Study goals:** To identify cost effective and scalable interventions that demonstrate improvements in the psychological, social, and economic functioning of survivors of sexual violence living in Eastern DRC.

**Introduction**  
Survivors of sexual violence have high rates of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Although treatment for symptoms related to sexual violence has been shown to be effective in high-income countries, evidence is lacking in low-income, conflict-affected countries.

**Methods:** In this trial in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 16 villages were randomly assigned to provide cognitive processing therapy (1 individual session and 11 group sessions) or individual support to female sexual-violence survivors with high levels of PTSD symptoms and combined depression and anxiety symptoms. One village was excluded owing to concern about the competency of the psychosocial assistant, resulting in 7 villages that provided therapy (157 women) and 8 villages that provided individual support (248 women). Assessments of combined depression and anxiety symptoms (average score on the Hopkins Symptom Checklist [range, 0 to 3, with higher scores indicating worse symptoms]), PTSD symptoms (average score on the PTSD Checklist [range, 0 to 3, with higher scores indicating worse symptoms]), and functional impairment (average score across 20 tasks [range, 0 to 4, with higher scores indicating greater impairment]) were performed at baseline, at the end of treatment, and 6 months after treatment ended.

**Results:** A total of 65% of participants in the therapy group and 52% of participants in the individual-support group completed all three assessments. Mean scores for combined depression and anxiety improved in the individual-support group (2.2 at baseline, 1.7 at the end of treatment, and 1.5 at 6 months after treatment), but improvements were significantly greater in the therapy group (2.0 at baseline, 0.8 at the end of treatment, and 0.7 at 6 months after treatment) (P<0.001 for all comparisons). Similar patterns were observed for PTSD and functional impairment. At 6 months after treatment, 9% of participants in the therapy group and 42% of participants in the individual-support group met criteria for probable depression or anxiety (P<0.001), with similar results for PTSD.

**Conclusion:** In this study of sexual-violence survivors in a low-income, conflict-affected country, group psychotherapy reduced PTSD symptoms and combined depression and anxiety symptoms and improved functioning.