

Psychology in the department of clinical immunology

Information for patients

This sheet answers common questions about clinical psychology services within clinical immunology. If you would like further information or have any particular worries please do not hesitate to ask your nurse, doctor or one of the psychology team.

Who are we?

In the department of immunology, we have a psychology service that works with people who have primary or secondary immunodeficiency. We help people think about how they are coping with their illness, possibilities for change and new solutions to improve their quality of life. We focus on how people can live with their illness in a way that reduces the negative impact it has on their life and relationships.

What is clinical psychology?

Clinical psychology is an established profession within the NHS. All qualified clinical psychologists have studied psychology for at least six years and have had specialist professional training. We are interested in behaviours, thoughts and feelings. Unlike doctors (including psychiatrists) clinical psychologists do not prescribe medication.

What is cognitive behavioural therapy?

Cognitive behavioural therapy, or CBT, is a talking treatment that helps individuals identify and challenge some of the unhelpful patterns of thinking (cognitions) and behaviour that they can get into. This, in turn, can improve how they feel about things.

The diagram below shows an example of an unhelpful pattern that people can find themselves in. These factors can interact to create a vicious circle that can keep the problem going.



How can CBT help you?

CBT has been shown to be helpful for individuals with physical health problems, like pain or fatigue, as well as for people experiencing anxiety, depression, panic, phobias (including agoraphobia and social phobia), and stress.

As a result of a diagnosis of primary immunodeficiency people may be coping with a number of other difficulties, including:

- low mood
- worries about diagnosis, symptoms (eg breathlessness) or long-term health
- insomnia (poor sleep) and tiredness or fatigue
- stress

CBT can help people manage these difficulties better.

How to access the service

Speak with your doctor or nurse about your interest in psychology, or contact us directly on the number below, and an appointment will be set up for you.

Your first session

Your first appointment will be a 50-minute assessment to better understand your difficulties and how we can support you. At that point the psychologist will share the best route to proceed; either continuing with therapy in the service or supporting you to access other services if that is more appropriate. This may include a community mental health team or a local charity.

Contacting the team

If you ever need to contact the immunology team, you should first contact us via the team email (rf.clinicalimmunology@nhs.net) or by calling our secretary (Chanell Pritchard) on **020 7830 2141**.

If you are unable to get through and it is an emergency, you can call the **Royal Free switchboard on 020 7794 0500**. During office hours ask to be put through to the **immunology registrar bleep** or, out of hours, the **on call immunology consultant**.

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