



## Introduction

### Background and Rationale

Depression and anxiety disorders are prevalent mental health conditions that significantly impact individuals' quality of life and functional capacity. While pharmacotherapy remains a cornerstone of treatment for these disorders, patient outcomes vary widely, suggesting that non-biological factors may play a role in determining treatment success. One such factor is the therapeutic alliance—a construct traditionally associated with psychotherapy—which encompasses the collaborative, supportive relationship between the patient and healthcare provider.

The importance of therapeutic alliance has been well-documented in the psychotherapy literature, consistently associated with better treatment adherence and improved clinical outcomes [1]. In the context of pharmacotherapy, where direct interaction between clinician and patient is often less frequent and more structured, the role of therapeutic alliance has received less empirical attention. Nevertheless, a strong therapeutic alliance could be equally relevant in enhancing pharmacotherapy outcomes by fostering trust, enhancing communication about medication use, and promoting adherence.

This systematic review seeks to address the following research question: What is the impact of therapeutic alliance on pharmacotherapy outcomes in patients with depression and anxiety?

The specific objectives are to:

1. Evaluate the association between the quality of therapeutic alliance and symptom improvement in patients receiving pharmacotherapy for depression and anxiety.
2. Investigate how therapeutic alliance influences patient adherence to prescribed medications.
- 3.

However, the review also revealed variability in the strength of the therapeutic alliance's impact on pharmacotherapy. While some studies reported a strong correlation, others found only modest effects. This variation may be attributed to several factors, including differences in study design, methods of measuring therapeutic alliance, patient populations, and the types of medications used. Moreover, the extent to which therapeutic alliance influences outcomes may depend on the severity of the disorder and the specific characteristics of the patient-clinician relationship.

### **Limitations of the current literature**