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## Editorial

# Recent advances in EMDR research and practice (Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy)

## *Avancées récentes dans la recherche et la pratique concernant les thérapies EMDR (Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy)*

Since 1989, several publications have brought evidence for the effectiveness of Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, particularly for the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Initially designed to treat individuals who had experienced trauma, this approach has since evolved to include applications to the treatment of several other psychopathological disorders. The discovery of EMDR may be compared – relatively speaking – to that of penicillin by Alexander Fleming: we can only acknowledge its effectiveness without necessarily understanding what goes on in the brains of the individuals who have been healed. And it is indeed a question of healing. Something happens, something of which the late David Servan Schreiber said with humour that it should earn a Nobel Prize one day. But we should not make of EMDR what it is not. It is not a treacle. In 1923, Janet wrote about certain psychotherapies: “One may recall on the subject of these general psychotherapies the memory of an old medicine, which played a considerable role during the Middle Ages, the treacle. It was a universal medicine that one could use for all possible occasions, because all known active substances were included hundredfold. All this was given to the patient in the hope that the illness, whichever it was, would find something suitable in this mixture. The therapeutic methods, which I have just studied, seem identical to a sort of psychological treacle, evoking a jumble of psychological phenomena and calling upon all mental operations in all sick people, whatever their ailment, hoping that each one will find something suitable within this hodgepodge” (Janet, 1923, p. 64, author’s translation). One should take care to not fall into such a trap.

For its development, EMDR certainly needs clinicians and their practical intelligence. That is the key to its worldwide success. But to establish and consolidate its legitimacy, to define its scope of action and relevancy, to understand what takes place in the EMDR process, sufficient research should be developed, a research that is able to draw upon several disciplines and not merely upon psychology. This approach has the merit of having the courage to seek the explanation to its functioning within other fields.

Therein lays EMDR’s strength, which makes it stand out from other psychotherapeutic approaches that are more selective and probably more closed to external influences. It may also be its

weakness at times. Indeed, such scientific dialectics are also those that make EMDR an inextinguishable research subject to which researchers must be sensitive. This issue of the *European Review of Applied Psychology* gathers a series of original articles dedicated to EMDR. The journal takes this opportunity to make this approach and its developments known to a readership that is less familiar with these issues, hoping to raise a greater interest among researchers and research teams, especially in Europe.

### Disclosure of interest

The authors have not supplied their declaration of conflict of interest.

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