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EXPLORING PATIENTS’ NEED FOR COUPLE THERAPY IN ADDICTION TREATMENT: A PATIENT-ENGAGED STUDY

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BACKGROUND

- Family- and couple-involved addiction programs are found to (1) aid recovery, (2) improve family functions, and (3) enhance the individual well-being of family members and partners (Copius et al., 2005; O’Farrell & Clements, 2012).
- A closer look at the family- and couple-involved addiction programs:
  - Family Support Groups: Coping Skills Therapy
  - Behavioral model: family and Couple Therapy
  - Systemic model: Family and Couple Therapy

ADDICTION: A PATIENT-ENGAGED STUDY

- Can CCT be disseminated into the system to fill the service gap?
- Patient advisors (PAs): - Criteria: Individuals and couples who have experienced living with addiction in a couple relationship, and have gone through AHS addiction programs (for partner, addict, or both).
  - Recruitment: Couples from past CCT studies, from Strategic Clinical Network in Addictions and Mental Health, from AHS patient advisors.
  - Patient Advisory team (4-6 individuals): give input on designing the data collection instrument and feedback to the report of the results.

CURRENT STUDY

Collaborating with patient advisors (i.e., addiction patients and partners with past treatment experiences), I aim to explore couples’ perspective and couples’ experience with CCT and Treatment as Usual (TAU) for gambling and alcohol addiction at the AHS, to gain understanding on whether and for what reasons the couples find they need conjoint couple therapy in addiction recovery, and how CCT and TAU serve the couples with various life contexts and addiction issues.

- Research questions:
  1. What aspects of CCT and TAU do the couples find helpful and unhelpful?
  2. What other support and services did the couples hope to have during CCT and TAU?
  3. What types of couples respond particularly well and poorly to CCT?

METHODS

- Participants:
  - Recruitment: recruit from an ongoing study where couples with one/both partners having drinking and/or gambling addiction are randomly assigned to two treatment groups – CCT and TAU, in the AHS.
  - Criteria: CCT or TAU completion; no recent/recurring psychotic symptoms or other serious mental illness.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Shed light on patients’ (both addicts’ and partners’) needs for CCT and existing addiction programs in the system
- Whether for what purpose, and under what context the patients (i.e., addicts and partners) might need a certain type of service.
- Gain understanding on the addiction recovery process in couple dynamics
- The process of dual recovery (i.e., recovery of both partners)
- Patient experience with various addiction programs may provide new insights on cross-modality elements and processes conducive for change
- Gained knowledge on CCT in comparison with TAU will facilitate CCT’s knowledge translation, and informs therapist training in the field.
- The lessons learnt from the patient-researcher collaboration in this study provides references for future patient-engaged projects in the field of addiction.

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