2017

Exploring patients' need for couple therapy in addiction treatment: a patient-engaged study

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

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. (Copuis et al., 2005; O’Farrel & Clemens, 2012).

- A closer look at the family- and couple-involved addiction programs:

  - Family Support Group: Coping Skills Therapy
  - Family Support Group: Behavioral model: Family and Couple Therapy
  - Systemic model: Family and Couple Therapy

- Addiction is an individual’s disorder that affects social relationships.

- Emotional detachment from the loved one’s addiction

- Learning coping strategies

- Improved coping and decreased emotional distress in family members/partners

- No correlation on change in addition

- No improvement in family/couple adjustment

(Thomas & Corder, 2002)

- Family Support Group: Behavioral Couple Therapy (BCT): (Etter & W. S. Sessions, 2004; McCrady et al., 2010)

- Better than individual treatment alone in treating addiction

- Improves couple relationship

- Relieves intimate partner violence

- Enhances children’s psychosocial adjustment

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1996)

- Congruence Couple Therapy (CT): (Etter & W. S. Sessions, 2000)

- Stand-alone treatment with integrative approach

- Results on treating gambling addiction

- Improves couple adjustment and relationship with children

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 suicidal attempts/idéations that warrant immediate interventions.
  - CCT and 5 TAU couples (N=20).

- 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 addict, partner, or both).
  - Recruitment: couples from past CCT and TAU studies, from Strategic Clinical Network in Addictions and Mental Health; from AHS patient advisors.
  - Patient Advisory team (4-6 individual): give input on designing the data collection instrument and feedback to the report of the results.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Shed light on patients’ (both addicts’ and partners’) needs for CCT and existing addiction programs in the system

  - 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

  - Interaction between addiction recovery and 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

- Gain knowledge on CCT in comparison with TAU may 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

Yanjun Shi is a recipient of the 2016 Alberta SPOR Graduate Studentships in Patient-Oriented Research. Alberta SPOR Graduate Studentships in Patient-Oriented Research are jointly funded by Alberta Innovates and the Canadian Institute of Health Research.