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Effect of Brief Social Cognition and Interaction Training (SCIT) for People with Schizophrenia in a Psychiatric Day Hospital in Hong Kong

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Introduction

Social cognitive deficits are a key feature of schizophrenia and regarded as a determinant of functional outcome of the illness. Social Cognition and Interaction Training (SCIT) has emerged as a trendy approach to address these deficits with evidence of promising efficacy over the last decade. Nevertheless, the use of SCIT in hospitals in Hong Kong has been new and there have been limited studies to evaluate the effect of SCIT in Hong Kong.

Objectives

To evaluate the effectiveness of Brief Social Cognition and Interaction Training (SCIT) on improving social cognition and social functioning for clinically stable people with schizophrenia in a psychiatric day hospital in Hong Kong.

Methodology

This study was a double-blind, randomized controlled trial. Using convenience sampling, a total number of 24 participants with schizophrenia were recruited to participate in a brief SCIT in Psychiatric Day Hospital of Shatin Hospital. All participants were randomly assigned to either SCIT or Waiting-list control groups. The 12 participants in SCIT group were assigned to participate in 5 sessions of SCIT groups in 5 consecutive weeks, while 12 participants in the Waiting-list control group continued to receive conventional psychiatric day hospital program. The Face Emotion Identification Task (FEIT) and the Chinese version of The Social Cognition Screening Questionnaire (C-SCSQ) were used to assess four social cognition domains including emotion perception (EP), theory of mind (ToM), attributional bias tendency and tendency to jump-to-conclusions (JTC); Chinese version of the Personal and Social Performance Scale (PSP) was used to assess social functioning. All assessments were conducted at both baseline and post intervention.

Result

Mixed-factor ANOVA showed that there were borderline significant Time x Group

interaction in FEIT ($F=1.76$, $p=0.20$) and attributional bias ($F=4.00$, $p=0.059$). The SCIT group showed larger within group effect ($\eta^2=0.325$, $p=0.053$) than the Waiting-list control group ($\eta^2=0.053$, $p=0.47$) on FEIT. The Waiting-list control group showed decreased attributional bias tendency while the SCIT group did not. The Time Group interaction on ToM ($F=0.65$, $p=0.43$), JTC ($F=0.86$, $p=0.37$) and PSP ($F=0.00$, $p=1$) were statistically insignificant.

Conclusions: Brief SCIT may have the potential to improve participants emotion perception, but its impact of on theory of mind, attributional bias tendency, jump-to-conclusions tendency and social functioning will need further exploration.