



Service Priorities and Programmes
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Improve negative symptoms for better psychosocial functioning: Innovative Psychosocial Skill-Group Exercise Training for schizophrenia

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Introduction

Negative symptoms such as lack of social interaction, apathy, avolition, as well as poverty of speech and idea have chronically affected the psychosocial functioning of patients with schizophrenia. Over 80% of the patients experienced persistent problems with social functioning. The recovery model in mental health has emphasized the importance of supporting individuals to develop meaningful lives with good functioning despite continuing symptoms. In fact, exercise is shown to have positive effect on social cognition. Our aim is to maximize patients' psychosocial functioning through our Psychosocial Skill-Group Exercise Training.

Objectives

(1) To encourage patients to express their thoughts and ideas (2) To arouse patients' attention to the social and public issues (3) To improve patients' volition to interact with other co-patients (4) To improve patients' confidence in integration into community

Methodology

A repeated measure design was used. Sub-acute adult male psychiatric patients who attended physiotherapy in the Day Activity Centre were recruited. The patients received 6 sessions of group exercise training including aerobic exercise and mind body exercise. Then 6 sessions of Psychosocial Skill-Group Exercise Training including group exercise training and social sharing about current social and public issues were given to the same group of patients. A Self-rated questionnaire that took reference from the negative subscale of Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS) was used before and after the intervention. The data were analyzed using SPSS software package.

Result

Seventeen male patients received and completed the program were included in the

analysis. (Mean age: 35+/-11) They were diagnosed with schizophrenia or psychosis, 47% of the patients strongly agreed that the Psychosocial Skill-Group Exercise Training was useful, 41% agreed and only 12% disagreed. When comparing the result before and after the intervention, there were significant differences in patients' willingness to express themselves ($p=0.035$), patients' attention to social and public issues ($p=0.003$) as well as patients' confidence to adapt to the community ($p=0.046$). There was no significant difference in patients' initiation in interacting with others ($p=0.414$). The result suggested that Psychosocial Skill-Group Exercise Training can be an effective treatment to improve patients' willingness to express themselves, arouse their attention to the outside world and build up their confidence to adapt to the community. Given the impact of negative symptoms on psychosocial functioning, Physiotherapists should pay more emphasis on treatments addressing negative symptoms to support patients living in the community with better quality of life.