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Development of Treatment Program to Enhance the Effectiveness of Assertiveness Training in Psychiatric In-patient Occupational Therapy (OT) Service

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Introduction

Assertiveness training is one of the important domains in social skills training for psychiatric patients.   It aims at increasing self-understanding, building confidence and improving social interaction abilities (Hou et al 2004).   It is delivered based on cognitive behavioral & psychoeducational approach.   The aims of the program are to 1) facilitate patients to increase the awareness of own communication styles and 2) develop assertive communication skills in daily living.   In view of the short average length of hospital stay in informal psychiatric ward setting in Shatin Hospital (SH), a treatment package is developed to improve the efficiency of service delivery.   It includes a triage system, weekly group or self-learning video, homework and interactive computerized software.

Objectives

(1) Enhance social skills of psychiatric in-patient in terms of reducing social anxiety, improving self-understanding and assertiveness   (2) Increase the effectiveness of service delivery

Methodology

Psychiatric in-patients in SH aged 18-60 with assertiveness problem in SS were recruited in the program.   Consecutive sampling was applied.   Patients with inadequate assertiveness skills were referred for the program and were screened by mini mental state examination (MMSE).   The program consisted of 3 components including 1) group, self-learn or mixed (group & self-learn) treatment, 2) interactive assertive game and 3) homework.   Patients were assigned to either group, self-learn or mixed treatment based on patient's mental state, discharge plan and personal preferences.   Pre & post outcome measures included the Rathus' Assertiveness Scale (RAS) and Lio bowitZ Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS) were adopted.

Result

Apr-Nov 2015, total 35 patients (52.5% female, mean age: 33.6) had completed the

program.   Among the subjects, 18 patients were diagnosed schizophrenia, 15 were mood disorder, 2 were adjustment disorder with 5 (12.5%) dropped-out.   In group program (N=24), there were 4.9% and 15% of improvement in RAS & LSAS respectively ($p<0.05$, paired t-test).   The data of self-learn and mixed programs (N=11) were analyzed together due to small sample size with 1.9% and 28.5% of improvement in RAS & LSAS respectively ($p<0.05$, paired t-test).   The newly developed assertiveness training program was effective in enhancing assertiveness and decreasing social anxiety of psychiatric in-patients.   Further study with larger sample size would be useful to refine the program.