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WHOLISTIC NEWS REVIEWS: Traditional, Complementary, Alternative, and Psycho-Social Modalities of Treatment

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Life events, personality disorders and suicide attempts

Dr. Shirley Yen and colleagues report that after conducting a prospective study of 489 subjects diagnosed with Personality Disorders on Axis-II of the DSM, 61 attempted suicide during the 3 year follow up. The most frequent life events preceding the suicide attempts were negative events involving love-marriage conflict or crime-legal matter conflicts. These life events were significant predictors of suicide attempts even after controlling for a baseline diagnosis of borderline personality disorder, major depressive disorders, substance use disorders, and a history of childhood sexual abuse. The authors conclude that certain types of negative life events are unique risk factors for imminent suicide attempts among individuals diagnosed with Personality Disorders.

Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 2005, 73(1), 99-105

Carbohydrate cravings reduced through chromium for atypical depression

Dr. John Docherty and colleagues report on a double-blind, randomized study showing that supplementation with Chromium reduces carbohydrate cravings for patients diagnosed with atypical depression. In a multicenter 8 week replication study, 113 adult outpatients with atypical depression were randomized in a 2:1 ration to receive 600ug per day of elemental chromium as CrPic or placebo. The outcome measures used were the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale and the Clinical Global Impressions Improvement Scale. In the evaluable population, the CrPic group had significant improvements related to appetite increase, increased eating, carbohydrate craving and diurnal variation of feelings as compared from baseline to the placebo group. Researchers found that 600ug of elemental chromium may benefit patients with atypical depression and severe carbohydrate craving. Dr. Docherty partially concludes by saying, "These results suggest that the use of chromium picolinate may be beneficial for patients with atypical depression who also have severe carbohydrate craving."

Psychiatric Practice 2005, 11, 302-314

Early Migraine Headaches Helped More with Acetaminophen-Aspirin-Caffeine (AAC) Combination Than Sumatriptan

Dr. Jerome Goldstein and colleagues from the San Francisco Headache Clinic report that at the earliest sign of a migraine headache, the use of combination analgesics, such as coffee and aspirin, can be therapeutically potent. Dr. Goldstein and colleagues compared the combination treatment with the use of 50mg Sumatriptan in 171 subjects treated when the first symptoms of migraine occurred. Patients treated with AAC experienced significantly greater pain intensity reduction than those taking sumatriptan beginning 2 hours after dosing and continuing throughout a 4-hour treatment period. Little or no functional disability was reported by 81% of the AAC patients as compared with only 62% of the sumatriptan patients. In addition to the reported results, Dr. Goldstein also recommended that “Physical methods to control headache such as biofeedback therapy, massage, yoga and exercises should be utilized,” in addition to either over the counter medication or prescription medication.

Headache 2005, 45, 973-982

Misperceptions about nicotine can hamper smoking cessation

At the 71st Annual Meeting of the American College of Chest Physicians in Montreal, it was reported that the belief of some smokers that nicotine causes cancer can significantly interfere with efforts to stop smoking. Lead investigator Dr. Virginia Reichert reported that out of a survey of 1,139 patients enrolled in a smoking cessation program, the majority believed that nicotine causes cancer and some smokers also believed that smoking ‘light’ cigarettes would give them lower nicotine and hence, lower their risk of getting cancer. Therefore, many smokers enrolled in smoking cessation programs are reluctant to use nicotine patches to help them quit. Dr. Reichert states, “Smokers need a comprehensive care program that includes pharmacotherapy using nicotine patches” since going cold turkey has a very high failure rate in smoking cessation.

U.S. leads the world in medical errors

In a questionnaire-based study which surveyed 700-750 adults, half of whom were over 50 years of age, Schoen and colleagues report on a 2005 survey of sicker adults (chronic disease and recent intense utilization of the medical care system) in Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, the UK and the US, the US stood out in the categories of inefficient care and medical errors. For example, lab-error rates were significantly higher in the United States as compared to the other five countries. In addition, over-all, one in four patients in each country said that medical risks were not completely explained to them; close to one in five said they had inadequate pain management. Nineteen to 26% of patients in all countries reported communication gaps between staff and themselves as well as one in six saying they wished they had had greater involvement in the decision making process regarding their treatment. One-third of patients in all countries surveyed reported that they did not receive instructions on what symptoms to watch for and did not know whom to contact with questions and had no follow up care arrangements. The researchers conclude, “No country emerges as systematically the best or worst.” The findings suggest that many of the problems with which policy leaders are grappling transcend specific payment or delivery systems and will require more fundamental transformation.

Health Affairs (2005;10.1377/hlthaff.w5.509) <http://content.healthaffairs.org> and <http://www.cmwf.org>

Psychotherapy clients utilization of complementary and alternative therapies

Dr. Gary Elkins and colleagues surveyed 262 psychotherapy clients and found that mind-body therapies were the CAM Therapies most often used (44%) followed by herbal therapies (34%), physical modalities (21%), spiritual modalities (17%) and finally special diet (14%). Even so, only 34% of the psychotherapy clients surveyed had mentioned their use of complementary and alternative therapies to their psychotherapists. The authors also report that psychotherapy clients seeking treatment for anxiety and depression may be more likely than the general population to use CAM therapies for relieving their symptoms. The researchers conclude, "Taken together, these data suggest that the use of complementary and alternative therapies may be an important consideration in providing psychotherapy to some clients."

Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training 2005, 42(2), 232-235

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