Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care East of England

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Evaluation of Interpersonal Counselling (IPC) for Young People with Depressive Symptoms in Non-Specialist Services

IPC is highly effective at reducing depressive symptoms in non-specialist services; and young people and counsellors like it

Why?

The majority of YP receiving treatment for depressive symptoms in the UK receive this from staff with minimal specialist mental health/therapeutic training. There is no evidence to guide them as to what treatments are likely to be effective.

What?

A single arm pilot study was conducted to test the effectiveness and acceptability of Interpersonal Counselling (IPC) in young people (YP) with depressive symptoms.

Who?

Youth workers received a two day training course in IPC, followed by regular supervision. They delivered IPC to 23 YP who they would normally see in their service, with depressive symptoms as their main problem.

Background

Mild depression is associated with adverse academic, social and health outcomes; and increased risk of moderate/severe depression. Young people (YP) with mild depression are usually seen by staff with no formal training in delivering evidence-based treatments in non-specialist services. There is a lack of evidence to guide the treatment of YP with mild depression seen within these services. Interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) has a strong evidence base for adolescent depression. Interpersonal counselling (IPC) is a shorter (six sessions) and simpler form of IPT which is suitable for treating mild depression. IPC has been shown to be more effective than antidepressants for adults with mild depression. Unlike for IPT, it is feasible to train youth workers (without specialist mental health training) in IPC.

Youth workers received a two day training course in interpersonal counselling, followed by regular supervision. They delivered IPC to 23 YP who they would normally see in their service, with depressive symptoms as their main problem.

Findings

Mean(sd) RCADS depression-T scores fell from 78.2(11.1) to 52.9(16.8). Qualitative interviews demonstrated that YP and youth workers were positive about IPC. Participants detailed specific advantages of IPC above standard counselling, including practical help, the use of goals, psychoeducation and integrating a self-rated questionnaire into treatment: *'Setting goals each week did help because even if I didn't want to talk to someone, I would know that my goal for the end of the week was talking to someone...'*

IPC is likely to be an effective and acceptable treatment for YP with primarily depressive symptoms seen in local authority non-specialist mental health services. Further research is needed to determine if it is more effective than current treatment as usual.

References

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What is NIHR CLAHRC East of England?

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) East of England is a five year programme of applied health and social care research which focuses on the needs of people with complex problems, often vulnerable, when multiple agencies are involved in their care: young people, frail older people, those with dementia, learning disabilities, acquired brain injuries or mental ill health.

The CLAHRC East of England collaboration encompasses some thirty-six organisations, with research hubs in the Universities of Cambridge, Hertfordshire and East Anglia working closely with individuals and organisations involved in the whole care pathway.

Service users and carers are at the heart of what we do, in parallel with an ambitious public health research programme.
Co-production and collaboration at all stages of the research process are fundamental to making a positive impact through applied health research.

For more information:

Website: https://www.clahrc-eoe.nihr.ac.uk/2016/08/mixed-methods-evaluation-interpersonal-counselling-pilot/

Interpersonal Psychotherapy UK Network: https://www.iptuk.net

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