

Expressive writing paradigm: Impact on the health of adolescents with diabetes

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The aim of this study is to explore the impact of a therapeutic intervention based on the Pennebaker's Paradigm on the physical and psychological health of adolescents with diabetes. We hypothesise that the expressive writing sessions will contribute to reduce the levels of the main biochemical indicators of diabetes, i.e., glycaemia and glycosylated hemoglobin (HbA1c), in the experimental group. This study's subjects are 36 adolescents with Type 1 Diabetes, ages between 12 and 19 years old ($M=16$; $SD=2.01$). The experimental group ($n=20$) completed the narrative task, which consisted of a 10 minute writing session a day, on three consecutive days, about traumatic events or emotionally intense experiences. The control group did not have any writing session ($n=16$). The results demonstrate that, in the short term, glycaemia levels decreased significantly in the experimental group, although there were not significant differences in biochemical indicators in the long term. There was an increase in the long term glycaemia levels in the control group. Hence writing benefited health in the short term and functioned as a protective factor against metabolic deregulation in the long term. Diabetes was the main theme in the narratives, which reveals its emotional importance in the adolescents' lives. We suggest this narrative intervention might be a useful complement to the medical treatment of diabetes. Writing on a more regular basis may produce long term effects in adolescents' health, and contribute to the construction and organization of their daily experiences and emotions.

Interpersonal counseling for frequent attenders of primary care: A telephone outreach study

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Patients to primary care referred to as Frequent Attenders (FAs) are known for their high consumption of medical services. FAs are known to suffer from multiple medical conditions, chronic pain, psychological distress, and high rates of mood and anxiety disorders. However, research into interpersonal factors related to FA has also pointed to the important role of social support (or lack thereof) and interpersonal difficulties in these patients, and their maladaptive care-seeking patterns. By considering FAs in an interpersonal theoretical framework we tested the possibility to change utilization patterns with appropriate treatment. To overcome FAs known refusal for referrals to psychological care, we delivered our treatment over the telephone in a stepped outreach format, not requiring patients to be referred, approach, or travel to sessions. In the present study we compare four treatment conditions: (1) three months of telephone interpersonal counseling (T-IPC), a brief variant of Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) conducted over the telephone; (2) three months of supportive telephone attention; (3) a telephone survey, conducted twice within a 3 month period; and (4) collection of utilization information from health-care provider's database, with no patient contact. We hypothesized that both active treatments would show a reduction in utilization of medical services over the time of the intervention and over a one-year follow up, as well as a reduction in mood, anxiety and somatization symptoms. We also hypothesized that this reduction would be greater and last longer in the IPC group compared to the attention only group. Preliminary results will be presented and discussed.

Promoting health behavior in children via SMS

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Abstract Several studies showed that technology enhanced measures could be a useful and innovating tool to promote health behaviors. In this study, a Short Message Service (SMS) program was used to monitor three key behaviors: fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity and screen time. Based on the daily input (SMS) of each participant, the program sent an automatic supporting feedback message. The aim of this minimal intervention (8 weeks period) was to improve all indicated behaviors. Testing feasibility, adherence and satisfaction of the SMS system were additional aims of the study. Eight classes with a total of 160 children (age 8 to 10) participated in this study and were randomly assigned into an intervention group (with access to the program) and a control group (without access to the program). The adherence was high with participants sending monitoring SMS in 67% of the intervention days. Furthermore, high satisfaction scores were reported (89.4% were satisfied with the program). Significant results regarding fruit and vegetable consumption were found, $F(2, 168) = 7.86$, $p < .01$ indicating that participants in the intervention group increased the amount of fruit and vegetable intake over time. However, results for physical activity, $F(2, 162) = 0.93$, $p = .399$, and screen time, $F(2, 168) = 1.40$, $p = .249$ were non significant. Summarizing the results, this minimal intervention demonstrated to be a feasible program to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. There seems to be a need to further investigate such programs, as 32% of the children were overweight and 8% obese.