TRANSLATING EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE FOR MANAGING COMORBID SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL ILLNESS USING A MULTI-MODAL TRAINING PACKAGE

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Introduction and Aims: The Pathways to Comorbidity Care (PCC) training package was designed to improve management of comorbid mental health and substance use disorders. The PCC is a multi-modal training package including seminar presentations on evidence-based treatment, workshops conducted by local ‘clinical champions’, individual clinical supervision (telephone), and access to an online portal containing evidence-based information, manuals, tutorials and webinars. We aimed to evaluate the impact of the PCC package.

Design and Methods: This was a 9 month controlled before-and-after study of PCC versus control across 6 outpatient drug and alcohol services in NSW (metro, outer metro/inner regional, and regional local health districts). Outcome measures included identification, assessment and management of comorbidity, clinician confidence (self-efficacy), and knowledge and attitudes to comorbidity.

Results: 35 participants (PCC = 20, control = 15) completed the study. Significant improvements in self-efficacy were found between baseline and follow-up in PCC clinicians compared to controls ($p < 0.05$). There were also significant improvements in attitudes including those relating to routine screening for mental health conditions and monitoring of mental health symptoms throughout treatment ($p$'s $< 0.05$). Change in self-efficacy was predicted by professional role in the service whereby psychologists demonstrated greater improvements.

Discussion and Conclusions: The PCC training package was an effective means of increasing clinician self-efficacy and attitudes towards screening and assessment of comorbidity.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Individual tele-supervision and clinical workshops were more effective and acceptable to clinicians relative to online materials and seminars.

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