Motivational Interviewing and Smoking Cessation: What Is It and Is It Effective?

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Background

Motivational Interviewing is a relatively new counseling technique commonly used in the field of addiction treatment like smoking cessation. It is also recommended by international smoking cessation guidelines for poorly motivated smokers.

Objectives

To study the efficacy of Motivational Interviewing on Smoking Cessation and to identify potential effect modifiers.

Methods

A comprehensive literature search was done on studies about the use of "motivational interviewing" on "smoking cessation". This study was limited to randomized controlled trial and those trials with explicit reference to the counseling method "motivational interviewing" as innovated by Miller & Rollnick. The following indicators were noted: credentials of the treatment providers, the specific training procedures (for performing motivational interviewing e.g. focused workshops), the exact nature of motivational interviewing (different aspects of the counseling e.g. the use of decision balance technique, problem feedback, or just "general spirit" etc.), the total duration of treatment, the nature of follow-up support, the use of supplementary technique (e.g. the use of self help booklet, computer program) and whether the treatment provider were administering the treatment as directed (e.g. was there supervision of the counseling process, videotaping or guided by a manual).

Results

Preliminary analysis indicates that the motivational interviewing is efficacious for smoking cessation with pooled odds ratio 1.5 (95% CI 1.32-1.7). The duration of the study period (6, 12 months or longer abstinence), the duration of the counseling sessions and the number of follow-up sessions are potential effect modifiers. However, the trainings that were given to the treatment provider were not mentioned in about half of the studies. Methods to ensure fidelity of counseling were either not described or inadequately described in most papers.

Conclusions

Motivational interviewing seems to be a promising technique for smoking cessation. The potential effect modifiers identified may help to guide the formulation of an effective counseling program. But as there were large variations in the integrity of the interventions used, the results should be interpreted with caution.

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