



ORIGINAL RESEARCH

The Behavioral and Psychological Impact of a Multidisciplinary Approach to Healthcare

Christina M. Krause, Ph.D., Maria E. Kuhn, M.A., M.S., N.C.C., L.P.C.,
Christopher S. Jones, Ph.D., Donald R. Lucas, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This study assessed health-related outcomes of an intervention program for 36 individuals dealing with multiple, chronic illnesses. Participants improved in their physical functioning, increased health-related behaviors, decreased emotional distress, and increased confidence in lowering their use of emergency care. Additionally, participants perceived the program as providing better care than previous healthcare systems.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to assess the health-related outcomes of an intervention program for individuals dealing with multiple-chronic health illnesses. Outcomes were assessed utilizing attitudinal, emotional, and behavioral measures. Based on previous research demonstrating a positive relationship between people's perception of control and their health (e.g., Reich & Zautra, 1991; Thompson & Spacapan, 1991), the intervention program was designed and developed. The purpose of the program is to implement a collaborative process among chronically ill individuals and a multidisciplinary team of health advocates to focus on the personal finance, physical, social, psychological, vocational, and spiritual issues of the individual. Through education, training and decision support, the team jointly establishes objectives and goals with the participants. These goals include improving the health of the participants, improving the effectiveness of their healthcare, decreasing their dependency on the emergency healthcare system, and increasing health-related behaviors. Thirty-six participants with multiple, chronic health-related conditions served as participants. To evaluate the outcomes of the intervention program, the following questionnaires were administered:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SURVEYS:

1. **Does the program influence participants' physical functioning?**
(SF-36 Health Survey [General Health Question; Bodily Pain Question; Pain and Ability to Work Question]; Ware, Snow, Kosinski & Gandek, 1993)
2. **Does the program influence participants' perception of their physical well-being?** (Perceptions of Control Questionnaire, Krause & Saarnio, 1996)
3. **Does the program influence participants' perception of their psychological well-being?**
(Self-efficacy to Manage Disease, Lorig, Stewart, Ritter, Gonzalez, Laurent, & Lynch, 1996)
4. **Does the program influence participants' confidence in decreasing their use of emergency care?**
(Self-efficacy to Manage Disease, Lorig, Stewart, Ritter, Gonzalez, Laurent, & Lynch, 1996)
5. **Does the program influence behavioral changes in diet and exercise?**
(Perceptions of Control Questionnaire, Krause & Saarnio, 1996)
6. **Do the participants perceive the collaborative approach as more effective than previous healthcare services?**

Results:

1. Significant increase in participants' physical functioning, $ps < .05$.
2. Significant increase in the positive perceptions of physical functioning, $p < .05$.
3. Significant increase in the confidence for continuing activities, $p < .05$ and decreases in emotional distress, $p < .10$.
4. Significant increase in participants' confidence in their ability to decrease their use of emergency care, $p < .05$.
5. Significant changes in the quality of diet and amount of exercise $ps < .05$.
6. Participants rated their healthcare services in the program as significantly better than previous healthcare services, $p < .01$.

Benefit Performance Associates, LLC

CONCLUSIONS

The present study indicates that using a collaborative approach for the treatment of individuals with multiple-chronic illnesses has a positive impact on their health and psychological well-being. The program allows individuals to gradually assume control and responsibility for their healthcare. Additionally, participants improve in their physical functioning and the process enables them to gain control of certain health-related activities and behaviors. These physical and psychological benefits decrease their emotional distress and influence their confidence in decreasing the over-use of emergency care. Moreover, the participants perceive the program to be more beneficial in providing healthcare services as compared to previous care.