

Title

Clinical experiences with cognitive remediation integrated with vocational rehabilitation in patients with first- episode schizophrenia: The MORPHEUS project

Young person with schizophrenia: “Every morning an elephant is sitting on top of me”

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Introduction

The positive effects of early intervention in first episode patients with schizophrenia(FES) are well known. Often remaining symptoms are neurocognitive deficits which have a great impact on everyday life and vocational functioning (Barrios, M et al, 2016)

Almost 2/3 of all FES patients used to end up with an early retirement during their 2-years OPUS-treatment period. We wanted to investigate if we could change this pattern by MORPHEUS, an intensive collaborative project between OPUS and the job centre in Aarhus, Denmark. Here cognitive remediation training (CRT) was combined with vocational rehabilitation. Self-selected goals were part of the overall rehabilitation goal.

Aims were to improve patients functioning, to identify supportive coping strategies and develop problemsolving skills to help patients bridge knowledge from the vocational effort to everyday life as well as counteract stigma.

Methods

The duration of training ranged from 6-12 months. Focus was on training vocational skills as well as compensatory training, integrated in the tasks at work.

By using a competence questionnaire modified to FES by Work Behavior Inventory (WBI) (Bryson et al.1997), we focused on work capacity, cognitive, social and communicative competences, as well as professional development. Improvements were investigated, often combined with CBT and acceptance commitment therapy.

The employers were informed about schizophrenia and specific cognitive needs of the patient. The patients were offered 8 group sessions focusing on vocational skills.

Results

The aim of this study was participation of 40 FES. In fact, a total of 81 participants were included during the first 2 years.

Collaboration has been established with 65 employers in both private and public companies.

There seems to be promising results that CRT as an integrated element in vocational rehabilitation can improve social and cognitive functioning of individuals with schizophrenia.

Discussion and conclusion

Collaboration and the use of the competence questionnaire disclosed the remaining effects of cognitive dysfunctions, specifically related to work challenges. The effect of combination with vocational rehabilitation has been very promising. Can we transfer the MORPHEUS methods to other types of psychiatric diseases?

