

Motivational Interviewing and CBT to Reduce Substance Use Problems and Improve Mental Health and Well-Being

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Substance use problems and mental ill-health commonly co-occur. Psychological treatments for these problems have traditionally been delivered separately in different services.

Accordingly, many people with these experiences do not receive adequate treatment, resulting in worse treatment outcomes, including increased rates of relapse, medication use and health care costs. In the longer term, mental ill-health and substance use problems are themselves associated with increased rates of chronic diseases like cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and cancer. Consequently, there is a life expectancy gap of around 20 years between people living with mental ill-health and substance use problems versus those not experiencing such problems.

Our group has begun to investigate how best we can apply healthy lifestyle approaches employing motivational interviewing and cognitive-behaviour therapy (MI/CBT) among 'hard to reach' groups such as disengaged youth, people living with mental ill-health and substance use problems, residents of rehabilitation facilities for substance use problems, mutual aid participants and people undergoing treatment for head and neck cancer. MI/CBT using a healthy lifestyles framework for co-existing mental ill-health and substance use issues represents an important new innovation in early intervention, treatment and maintenance of change. Modes of delivery include telephone, group and face to face by health or peer workers.

A healthy lifestyles approach is flexible, lessens stigma, appeals to people, avoids prematurely focusing on substance misuse and eliciting resistance, and it encourages change consistent with each person's values.