Therapeutic processes in dialectical behavior therapy skills training for alcohol use disorder treatment: Motivation for change and coping skills

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Statement of the Problem: It is well established that one of primary therapeutic process in substance use disorders (SUDs) treatment is the enhancement of client motivation for change. Furthermore, coping skills (CS) are an important predictor of outcome of treatment for alcohol dependence as well as they are a primary mechanism of change in cognitive-behavioral treatments for SUDs. It was also demonstrated that dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) mechanisms of change are related to the learning and practice of DBT behavioral skills. This study aims to explore trends of different aspects of motivation for change and coping strategies use during 3-month DBT skills training (ST) program for alcohol use disorder (AUD) treatment. Additionally, we evaluated the relationship between the previous therapeutic processes and the dimensions of emotional dysregulation (ED) and experiential avoidance (EA), which are considered relevant domains for relapse prevention.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: We proposed an observational study including 40 AUD patients consecutively admitted to the treatment. We administered MAC2-A (motivation for change), DBT-WCCL (use of functional and dysfunctional CS), DERS (ED measure) and AAQ-II (EA measure) at the beginning, after 1 month and at the end of intervention. Data analysis was based on linear mixed model for repeated measures.

Findings: 39 patients concluded the program. Considering motivational variables, we observed significant improvements in self-efficacy (SE), discrepancy (DI) and stabilization (ST). Patients showed a significant increase of the use of DBT-CS as well as a significant decrease of dysfunctional coping skills (DCS). DBT-CS and DCS partially explained ED and EA trends during the treatment. Respectively, SE and DI were associated with ED and EA levels during the program.

Significance: DBT-ST might be effective in enhancing client commitment for abstinence maintenance as well as in replacing DCS with functional CS which are involved in reducing ED and EA.

Biography
Marco Cavicchioli has expertise in “Study and evaluation of psychotherapeutic processes”. Particularly, his interests are related to the explanation of underlying processes implicated in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) efficacy. In this context, he is studying the role of some dimensions strictly associated with DBT model, such as emotional dysregulation and mindfulness, as well as other aspects not primary implicated in DBT, such as experiential avoidance, motivation for change and group dynamics. Eventually, these fields of study are leading him in evaluating the efficacy of DBT in other clinical setting, especially in substance use disorders treatment.

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