Understanding Factors Affecting Smoking Cessation Efforts of Individuals with Severe Mental Illness

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Background

- Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable illness and death in the United States. Although there is a declining prevalence of cigarette smoking among the general U.S. population, the rate of smoking in patients with severe mental illness (SMI) is twofold to fourfold higher than in the general population (NIH, 2014).

- Comorbid disorders such as addiction and a SMI are difficult to treat and diagnose due to shared disrupted neurologic pathways (NIH, 2010).

- Those with SMIs remain less likely to quit and much more likely to relapse after common smoking cessation interventions (Smith, Mazure et al. 2014). Research has also shown that approaches that are more flexible and open ended may be more beneficial for this population. (Fagerstrom and Aubin 2009).

- Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a client-centered, goal oriented counseling approach used to strengthen a persons own motivation and confidence in their ability to make change. MI is based on collaboration, evoking ideas about change, and increasing autonomy.
- Text messaging can also provide easy and convenient smoking cessation support.

- Existing bodies of literature do not address firsthand experiences of people living with SMI who have participated in a specific cessation intervention.

Purpose

- This study aims to identify factors that helped or hindered participants in their smoking cessation efforts during an MI intervention, enhanced with text messaging.

Methodology

- **Design/Setting:** Purposive sampling via EMR at Dent Neurological Clinic in Amherst, NY. The pre-test/post-test designed intervention comprising MI and text messaging took place for 4 weeks. Interviewing took place after 8 week follow up.
- **Sample Eligibility: (a)** currently smoke nicotine cigarettes, **(b)** aged 18 years or older, **(c)** diagnosed with major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. Individuals are excluded if they are currently receiving counseling or treatment for substance abuse.
- **Sample Size:** 8 participants
- **Data analysis:** Interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis

Results

Discouraging Factors

Habit	• "It's like losing my best friend" • "Not really the actual addiction itself – it's the addiction to the habit of doing it"
Use of Nicotine as a Stimulant	• "But with the hours I work, I hate using that as an excuse, but it really draws my energy out" • "You know when you smoke it gives you an extra little…boost"
Use of Nicotine for Stress Relief / Anxiety	• "I get anxious and my first impulse is to leave and have a cigarette." • "It would have been times that there was certain stresses that went on – you know if the nursing home called about my dad, you know. Then it was like, 'Well, I'll have a cigarette after'."
Peer influences / Lack of support	• "That'll be our little get together on the porch and we talk and we go out for a smoke" • "Thinking that it's cool, you know thinking that you're in style and in the 'group' and stuff. People with a beer and a cigarette in their hand."

Facilitating Factors

Family Encouragement / Influence	• "Especially when my dad says to me, says to me something like this, like 'Mr. B, out of everyone in the family I'd never thought you'd be the one to start smoking' and I, that's when I really wanted to quit." • "My fourteen year old… she'll come with me and then I won't smoke"
Coping Mechanisms	• "I think some of it I just, I replace it with caffeine" • "I had mild cravings but I found if I just think about something else or draw my attention on something else… just – 'Oh, I'll go get the vacuum cleaner going or I'm going to mop up."
Increased Support via Text Messaging	• "You were there for me" • "It felt like I wasn't alone"

Study Validity

- Due to the interventionist also conducting interviews, bias due to a pre-established relationship may have occurred.

- Also, demographics are not representative of the general population – a majority of participants being older, white males.

Discussion / Implications

- This study revealed a diverse range of experiences, both positive and negative, that those with SMI encountered during a smoking cessation intervention.

- Identifying and exploring coping mechanisms with participants may be advantageous. Also individualizing study components to match the specific needs of participants may be helpful.

Conclusions

- A better understanding of discouraging and facilitating factors during smoking cessation interventions will help the refinement of behavioral interventions for smoking cessation.

Resources available on request