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Motivational Interviewing: meta-analysis confirms its value as treatment option

What this research is about

This research looked at the effectiveness of motivational interviewing (MI) to treat disordered gambling. MI is a therapy that helps to move a client toward reducing their gambling by confirming and supporting their desire to change. Through a systematic review of existing MI studies and a meta-analysis of their results, this research provides a stronger indication of the effectiveness of MI than is possible with a single study. The researchers examined whether MI led to a change in the number of days gambled per month, and a change in the average dollars lost per month. The researchers also examined the long-term effects of MI on these outcomes.

What the researcher did

The researcher conducted a systematic review of studies that compared the results studies using motivational interviewing (MI) to treat disordered gambling to control groups that did not use MI. Six studies were included in a meta-analysis. The researchers measured changes in participants' gambling frequency and amount of money spent gambling.

What the researcher found

The meta-analysis indicated that motivational interviewing (MI) led to reductions in both days gambled and money lost. Six months after treatment, participants in the MI groups still gambled less frequently. However, differences in money lost were not found six months after treatment. Although these reductions may be modest, the results are meaningful given the low investment in time and resources required by MI. MI may be one of the few effective ways to engage gamblers who are reluctant to seek treatment. However, the researcher cautions that these findings should be

What you need to know

The researchers conducted a systematic review to examine the effectiveness of motivational interviewing (MI) as a treatment for disordered gambling. Six studies were included in a meta-analysis and the results of those studies were pooled for statistical analysis. MI was effective at decreasing the number of days spent gambling, and decreasing the amount of money lost. While the reductions were small, these results may be meaningful because MI requires very little time or resources to perform. The results provide some evidence for incorporating MI into clinical therapies and self-help tools, particularly for those who do not seek treatment. The independent nature and brief time required by this approach may be one way to encourage individuals to participate in therapeutic change.

weighed against the constraints of using a small body of literature.

How you can use this research

Practitioners may wish to integrate motivational interviewing (MI) into clinical treatments and self-help tools to treat disordered gambling. MI is short in duration, easy to administer and cost-effective as a supplement to other treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy. More research is needed to determine the longer term impacts of MI on gambling behaviour, and to identify the characteristics of MI that make it an effective treatment option.

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About the Researcher

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Citation

Keywords

Motivational interviewing, gambling, disordered gambling, meta-analysis

Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO)

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2017