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Abuse History and Therapy Participation Among Men and Women in Methadone Maintenance Treatment

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Abstract

The differences between men (N = 26) and women's (N = 27) self-reports of abuse and recorded therapy participation were examined among clients in a methadone maintenance treatment program. Results indicate that women report significantly more abuse. We found no significant difference in therapy participation between men and women.

Introduction

Several studies have examined the influence of gender on substance abuse treatment. When compared to men, women in substance abuse treatment programs report higher rates of emotional, physical or sexual abuse at some point in their lives (Grella, Scott, Foss, Joshi, & Hser, 2003). Women in substance abuse treatment programs are more likely to be less engaged in treatment than men (King & Canada, 2004), have lower treatment retention rates and lower treatment completion rates than men (Arfken, Klein, Menza, & Schuster, 2001). The purposes of the current study were: 1. To examine whether differences in self-reports of physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect history differ among men and women in treatment, and 2. To evaluate whether there was a significant difference in the amount of therapy men and women participated in over the course of three months.

Procedure

Participants

Participants consisted of 26 men and 27 women 18 years old or older who were receiving treatment at a methadone maintenance treatment center in the Mountain West.

Method

Each participant was given the General Information Questionnaire which was created for the purposes of this study. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items regarding demographic variables, including the participants' history of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and neglect. Specifically, participants were asked to report whether they have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect in their lifetime.

Participants were encouraged to attend individual or group therapy as part of routine substance abuse treatment, but therapy participation was a voluntary component of the clients' treatment. Thus, we were interested in whether therapy participation would differ between men and women. We calculated the amount of time participants spent in therapy over a period of three months. Greater therapy participation is thought to be an indicator of motivation for change and possibly treatment progress.

Results

Results of an independent samples t-test indicated that women reported significantly more physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect than men ($t(40) = 3.408, p = .002$). Results of a second independent samples t-test indicated that there is no significant difference in therapy participation between men and women ($t(40) = .010, p = .992$).

Conclusion and Implications

We found that women in a methadone maintenance program reported significantly more abuse and/or neglect than did men in the program. This finding is similar to that of previous research and adds to the literature base that suggests women in substance abuse treatment likely experience higher rates of abuse and/or neglect than men in treatment. Furthermore, we found that women did not attend more therapy than men. We conclude that participation in therapy is not contingent upon gender in this treatment setting. It should be noted that a significant weakness of the current study is the small number of participants which decreases the power of the study.

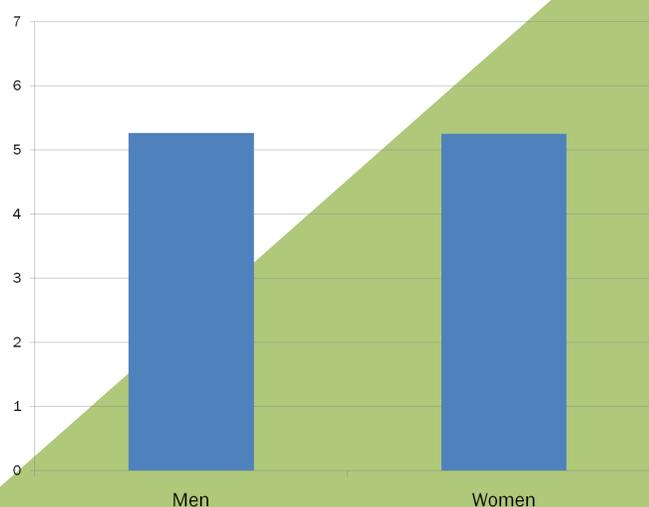
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Average number of hours spent in therapy over a 3 month time period



Participants self-report of history of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect

