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An evaluation of a dialectical behaviour therapy workshop

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Background Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is a psychotherapy used in the treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and related conditions with problems such as emotion dysregulation, anger management and impulse control problems, identity disturbance, interpersonal problems and dissociation. Due to the nature of these difficulties, affected patients are challenging to treat and consume a disproportionate amount of mental health care resources. DBT has been shown to be an effective treatment for these conditions. Finding effective ways to teach mental health practitioners DBT based skills is therefore of great importance. In June 2012, Dr. Rivera delivered a day-long didactic workshop on DBT focusing on emotion regulation and distress tolerance skills. Attendees included psychiatrists (4), psychiatric residents (6), nurses (3), social workers (11), psychologists (2) and occupational therapists (3). Attendees completed anonymously matched pre and post-workshop self-assessments that rated their perceptions of DBT, their skills in delivering elements of DBT, and the workshop itself. **Objectives** To determine the effect of a day-long DBT workshop on attendee knowledge, confidence, competence and attitudes when using DBT skills to work with patients with BPD and related conditions. **Results** 29 workshop attendees completed pre and post-workshop self-assessments. Prior to the workshop, attendees had modest perceptions of their knowledge, confidence, competence and attitudes about using DBT skills to work with patients with BPD and related conditions. Attendees also had high expectations of the potential impact of this workshop on these skills. After participating, attendees reported improvements in their perceptions of their knowledge, confidence, competence and attitudes about using DBT skills to work with patients with BPD and related conditions. However, these gains were not as significant as anticipated prior to the workshop. **Conclusions** Workshop attendees reported improvements in their perceptions of DBT skills and their abilities in delivering these skills. Thus, day-long workshops such as this one appear promising in improving mental health care provider's abilities to work with patients with BPD using DBT skills. Future research should be done on ways of teaching DBT skills to health care providers. This research should use subjective and objective measures of learning and utilization and incorporate a longitudinal perspective.