

Psychopharmacology, Depression, and the Medical Social Worker

Exploring Online Learning for Improving Disease Management

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Introduction

- Depression is one of the most common mental health diagnoses and causes of disability worldwide (WHO, 2020).
- Half of patients with mental illness are treated in hospital settings (Germack et al., 2018).
- Clinically trained social workers provide psychosocial therapies, evaluate patients, coordinate care, and recommend resources to clients (Cleak et al., 2020).
- However, critical knowledge of psychotherapeutics is lacking (Lacasse et al., 2016).
- Online learning is a cost-effective and accessible approach to provide continuing medical education training clinical depression (Lee et al., 2019; Levin & Fulginiti, 2017).

Methods

- A 45-minute online educational module was developed for medical social workers to assess their beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge on antidepressants used to treat patients' clinical depression before and after participation.
- A sample of 12 clinical social workers participated in the learning module.
- The participants completed pre- and post-tests to assess changes in the knowledge and attitudes after exposure to the module.

Objectives

1. Increase medical social workers' knowledge of antidepressants
2. Determine medical social workers' attitudes and beliefs regarding antidepressant use
3. Assess satisfaction with educational module

Intervention

- The participation of medical social workers in the online educational module focused on using antidepressants to treat patients with clinical depression.

Outcomes

- A change in medical social workers' beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge regarding patient use of antidepressants to treat clinical depression.

Statistical Analysis

Pre-test/post-test intervention outcomes were compared with paired *t*-tests.

Results

Table 1.
Baseline Characteristics of Social Work Participants (N = 12)

Demographic characteristics	N	Percent
Gender identity		
Male	1	8.3
Female	11	91.7
Age		
21-34	5	41.7
35-49	5	41.7
Over 50	2	16.7
Highest academic degree		
Bachelors	0	0
Masters	12	100
Doctorate	0	0
Employment status		
Full time	11	91.7
Part time	1	8.3
Social work experience		
Less than 5	6	50.0
5-10	2	16.7
Over 10	4	33.3

Table 2.
T-Test Results Comparing Mean Pre and Post Test Scores by Theme (N = 12)

	PRE	POST	?	t	p
(Beliefs) efficacy of psychopharmacology	3.71	3.75	.042	.561	.586
(Attitudes) need for social worker knowledge	3.87	3.92	.042	.364	.723
(Knowledge) personal competency	3.53	4.10	.567	4.46	.001**

Conclusion

- The participation of medical social workers in the developed online educational module has not changed their beliefs and attitudes; has improved their knowledge of antidepressants; and has improved their competency regarding the use of antidepressants.
- The results show that the online educational module is highly effective for filling gaps in the knowledge and competency of clinical social workers regarding antidepressant treatment for patient clinical depression.
- The online educational module can be used in the future to promote increased clinical social workers' knowledge and competency outside hospital care settings, or with other patient treatments.

References

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