From Training to Use: The Role of Counselor Attitude, Motivation, and Skill
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Problem: Research indicates the importance of practitioner attitudes in the implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs), and implementation models posit the importance of training and skill for use of EBPs. Yet, often, neither training in EBPs, nor reports of EBP use, are evaluated for skill levels in EBPs. Models also do not capture the role of other mediating counselor characteristics such as attitudes and motivation toward use of an EBP.

Evidence: Pre-training self-assessments by 76 counselors from 18 Texas outpatient clinics indicated low average training in MI, but high average reported use of MI with clients. Counselors also reported high confidence in MI use. This begged the questions—does skill level moderate extent of use of MI?, and how might attitudes and motivation affect use?

Strategy: To effectively deliver MI to substance abuse clients, counselors' training in MI should be adequately assessed for skill development, not just for knowledge and interest in the EBP. Better understanding of counselor attitudes, motivation, and skill level of counselors and their relationship to training and reported use can lead to better training more supportive implementation practices.

Practice Change: Evaluation of skill level, and analysis of potential mediation by counselor characteristics of the relationship between training and use.

Evaluation: Multiple regression of survey data that included measures of training, attitudes, motivation, and reported use of MI, and independent MI skill assessment.

Results: Supportive attitudes related to MI and motivation to use MI each partially mediates the relationship between amount of MI training and use of MI. Despite having little training, and low skill levels, counselors reported high usage of MI. Low skill level did not moderate high reported use of MI.

Recommendations: Training in EBPs should include teaching practitioners how to reliably self-assess their skill level. Further, training curricula should attempt to increase supportive attitudes and motivation to use an EBP. Without these essential elements, implementation may not effectively occur.

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