

I. SUMMARY

Readiness to change among individuals with alcohol problems

Background:

At-risk alcohol use is the third most common cause of death in Europe. Brief alcohol intervention is a model of counseling intended to provide prophylactic treatment of alcohol-related problems. Although brief alcohol interventions are effective, they often produce only modest gains, thus it is important to better understand which factors are involved in changing behavior to help to improve these interventions. Indicators linked to successful change include a patient's motivation and readiness to change. Readiness to change represents the temporal or developmental dimension of behavior change. Simple measures of readiness to change, fluctuations over time and the impact on clinical outcome should be further investigated.

Principal research questions to be addressed:

(1) What is the natural history of readiness to change? (2) Which factors affect readiness to change drinking behavior? (3) How does readiness to change drinking behavior affect and influence clinical outcome?

Hypotheses:

(1) Readiness to change alcohol use fluctuates over time. (2) Readiness to change is influenced by patient characteristics such as medical, psychological, environmental, and social factors. (3) Readiness to change alcohol use is influenced by brief alcohol intervention. (4) Readiness to change affects clinical outcome.

Methods:

Datasets consisting of 1472 at-risk drinkers who participated in 4 longitudinal clinical trials with elevated follow-up rates will be used. Information on readiness to change was obtained using reliable and valid measures. Longitudinal data analyses will be used to address the research questions. Various contributors that impact on readiness to change alcohol use will be assessed (addiction treatment, brief alcohol intervention, social support, severity of alcohol-related problems, medical and psychiatric co-morbidities, quality of life, social ramifications of drinking, being aware of alcohol problems, self-efficacy and confidence in ability to change). Statistical analyses will deal with multiple measurements, missing variables, and clustered analyses. Various models including hierarchical analyses and general estimating equations will be used.

Expected value:

The proposed research program will explore in detail components and determinants of the efficacy of brief alcohol intervention to better understand key components of patients' behavior change and thus to enhance the effectiveness of clinical use of brief alcohol intervention.