

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy as a Treatment for Alcohol Use Disorders in South Korea

Authors : Kim Eunha

Abstract : This study examined a group-based intervention for alcohol use disorders based on the principles of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) in patients (N=22; 63.7% female; M = 38.2 years old; 100% South Korean) in a residential alcohol addiction treatment program. Patients were randomly assigned to either ACT group (receiving the ACT intervention) or control group (receiving treatment as usual). The ACT intervention consisted of four 2-hr group sessions scheduled during two weeks. The first session focused on the negative effects of suppression and avoidance, and a rationale for defusion and acceptance using several of the well-known ACT metaphors (e.g., Two Scales Metaphor, Man in the Hole). The second session taught defusion and acceptance skills through such exercises as mindfulness, cutting a sour fruit, naming one's thoughts, and physicalizing. The third session included another mindfulness exercise and encouraged the participants to identify their values and set up life goals. The last session included more discussion on values and life goals, especially related to family and intimacy. The effects of the interventions were assessed using intent-to-treat analyses. The ACT interventions resulted in smaller immediate gains in motivation to stay sober and reductions in depression, anxiety, and experiential avoidance. In addition, at a 2-month follow up, those who attended the ACT group reported a lower average level of alcohol consumption and higher treatment attendance compared to the control group. These preliminary findings suggest that additional treatment and testing of ACT for alcohol use disorders will be crucial.

Keywords : acceptance and commitment therapy, alcohol use disorders, defusion, values

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