Reviewer’s report

Title: How effective are interventions to improve social outcomes among offenders with personality disorder: A systematic review

Version: 0 Date: 21 Aug 2017

Reviewer: Richard Howard

Reviewer’s report:

This paper reviews studies that have investigated the impact of various therapies on social outcomes in offenders with personality disorders (OPDs) or psychopathy. Only 11 studies were found that met the authors' inclusion criteria, and there was a lack of extractable data in 6 of these, limiting firm conclusions. What data there are (and from only 1 randomised control trial) does not convincingly demonstrate an effect of therapy, of whatever kind, on participation in social activities or employment. Perhaps the authors should consider the possibility that people with PD are better off being socially isolated, given that they are often socially difficult, unpleasant and troublesome. The authors’ introduction/background section is a bit sparse. They might mention e.g. Trull et al (2010) report of epidemiological data showing that PDs are associated with a heavy burden of social adversity. They are 4x more likely than people without PD to have problems with neighbours, friends or relatives; 5-6x more likely to have problems with the police or the law. The authors have done a service in reviewing what literature there is, albeit the conclusions are quite depressing. Hopefully the review will act as an impetus for more RCTs to be conducted that specifically look at social outcomes. There were a couple of recent trials whose results looked promising, one using STEPPS, the other using MBT, that I think may have looked at social outcomes. The STEPPS trial included an offender sample. The authors might like to add these if they met their inclusion criteria.

The paper is generally reasonably well written and organised, although there are some typological/syntactic wrinkles to be ironed out.

Where is figure 1? I don't see it.

Table 1 should be referred to at the bottom of p. 8, after "….met inclusion criteria (sic)".

p. 11 bottom: should be its, not it's.

p. 15: ….increased from 7 to 12? ….from 41% to 71%?

(lower down): participants' last parole.

p. 17: ….deliberately chosen to illustrate that……

(lower down): "See Table 3" - this should be Table 2?
p.18: …by GLM in a single case.

p.20: …their motivation to pursue…

p. 21: ....as analogous to the…

Conclusion

This paper could do with some tidying up, but would, if suitably revised, be worth publishing, if only to draw attention to the scarcity of treatment trials that have included social outcomes in PD offenders. Perhaps the major question that remains unaddressed - and the authors might care to pose this question - is: what features of PD - i.e. what specific constellations of maladaptive personality traits - are (a) associated with relatively poorer social outcomes, and (b) are amenable to treatment. Or is severity/comorbidity the crucial factor? The recent literature has suggested that severity of PD is predictive of impaired social function (e.g, Henggartner et al., ).

References

Black DW, Simsek-Duran F, Blum N, McCormick B, Allen J. Do people with borderline personality disorder complicated by antisocial personality disorder benefit from the STEPPS treatment program? Pers Mental Health. 2016;


Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Does the work include the necessary controls?
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Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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Yes

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