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Internet-based Therapy for the Treatment of Addictions in Syria!

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Internet-based therapy or Interest in technology-based interventions has proven itself as a new treatment modality for psychological disorders and health issues [1].

Online application studies in this field are being developed to treat several problems, such as anxiety [2], depression [3,4], insomnia [5] or for Stress management [6] and many other problems, etc.

The results clearly indicated that this type of online application/programmes via the internet and face-to-face treatment produce equivalent overall effects [7].

In addition, the studies clearly noted that the efficacy of the online application/programmes via the internet was more effective compared with controls [6-8].

What can be considered as advantages for this type of applications has been shown through the studies which have proven that these interventions led to higher motivation to change, better retention and greater knowledge of presented information [9].

Advantages

- First confidentiality: This represents an essential point in the effective psychotherapy as the patient could make an account with a nickname while the real name is not required.
- The ability to reach a large number of population due to its rather short format and accessibility.
- The opportunity to extend the program to a large population in an economical way with a reduced cost and greater availability compared to traditional treatment.
- The continuous availability is for 24 hours a day.
- Internet therapy may be suitable for those unwilling or unable to access traditional treatment.
- The option of online interventions could appeal specifically to people who do not seek medical/professional help in a health center because of social stigma for example.
- Early studies show positive results for online therapy including appropriate behavioral change.

If a short economic programme confidentially reaches to the utmost people...

Internet-based therapy for addiction

The studies worked on programmes to deal with the problem of addiction in its various forms.

These included many papers reporting Internet-based therapy for pathological gambling, substance abuse, or tobacco-cessation programs [10], alcohol abuse [5], binge drinking [9,11] or drug use [12].

Gainsbury and Blaszczynski [10] it is considered as a study. The first review attempt to summarize and evaluate the evidence of the effectiveness of Internet therapy for addictions.

The review concluded that Internet-based therapies for addictions are effective in achieving positive behavioral changes. And this positive treatment effects were reported following completion of therapy and at longer-term follow-up [10]. In a targeted study to examine the efficacy of these programs in the problem of drugs addiction which based on Electronic searches were conducted from 1966 to November 19, 2009, using MEDLINE, Psychlit, and EMBASE.

Interventions showed high acceptability despite substantial variation in the type and the amount of treatment [9].

Intervention of the internet for the addiction in Syria!

The situation in Syria is considered special because of the long war for the last years which led to catastrophic consequences especially in the field of the mental health/psychological health of the population. Addiction is one of the evolving problems particularly in the war environment due to the occurring chaos. In addition, the treatment of addiction in Syria is still in an entirely inadequate stages. Hence, we had thought about a program via the Internet aiming to treat or deal with the addiction problem in the population of this society. We can summarize the important essential points for this suggestion below.

A program via the Internet is an economical program dealing with the severe poverty in a society suffering from the scourge of war.

A program via the Internet handles the social stigma problem of the addiction. Especially that in a society like this in Syria, the idea of addiction is dealt with on basis of wrong religious beliefs criminalizing the addict instead of considering the addict as a patient needed help.

To reach the third point, the stages of the treatment of addiction should be explained according to the World Health Organization which includes three essential stages, the first is the medical treatment including admission to the specialized hospital for the treatment of physical dependence where the drug is withdrawn from the body nearly within two weeks. The second stage includes the rehabilitative treatment after the body became ready to start working on the rehabilitation of the person to deal with the causes, the pressures and the external factors to enhance his ability and his strength to resist the addiction and to avoid returning to it. All this occurs in specialized health centers including reservation of the treated patient and protecting him from the external conditions for about six months or more with concentrated intensive psychological treatment to develop his personality and enhance his strength and ability to deal with the causes and the pressures through healthy and appropriate coping strategies. Then the third stage starts after getting the treated person out of the rehabilitation center through following up his case with a psychotherapist in an outpatient clinic.

The second stage is a central essential step which is necessary to protect the patient from quickly returning to addiction.

According to the World Health Organization, Syria is among the 30% countries around the world where the first stage of the treatment of addiction which is the physical dependence is available. Whereas having rehabilitation centers is not available as many developing countries. However, the problem is increasing due to the war in Syria. Thus, spreading of the addiction among the population is significantly increasing more than the average spreading in other countries in the world.

So, returning to third point, the importance of this type of programs in an environment such as Syria represents by an emergency solution that should be applied faster than any other stage in the traditional treatment which may take years.

In addition, the Internet is available in Syria for a huge portion of the population despite of the bad economic situation.

What to work now?

The application of this program needs enough resources even academic or financial. We should collaborate our experiences and studies to work on providing the academic resources which will enrich their experiences in case of concluding experts from all around the world to work with us on this project. While we will be waiting for the financial support from resources such as the World Health Organization and other organizations that support the contributions in this field.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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