



Western mental health training for Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners



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焦慮

鬱悶

躁狂



精神

Table 1 Changes in engagement, confidence and attitudes in the care of patients with mental health problems

	Pre-course (n=33)	Post-course (n=33)	Wilcoxon signed rank test (pre vs post)	Post-course (n=20)	6-month Follow-up (n=20)	Wilcoxon signed rank test (post vs follow-up)
The number of patients whose chief complaint and associated symptoms are obviously psychological that I see per week						
0 - 5	11 (33.3%)	16 (48.5%)	Z= 1.213, p= 0.225	8 (40.0%)	9 (45.0%)	Z= 0.500, p= 0.617
6 - 10	17 (51.5%)	13 (39.4%)		9 (45.0%)	8 (40.0%)	
11 - 15	4 (12.1%)	2 (6.1%)		2 (10.0%)	3 (15.0%)	
> 15	1 (3.0%)	2 (6.1%)		1 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)	
I am confident of recognizing patients with psychological problems						
Strongly disagree	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	Z= -2.357, p= 0.018	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	Z= 0.000, p= 1.000
Disagree	13 (39.4%)	6 (18.2%)		3 (15.0%)	4 (20.0%)	
Agree	19 (57.6%)	23 (69.7%)		15 (75.0%)	13 (65.0%)	
Strongly agree	1 (3.0%)	4 (12.1%)		2 (10.0%)	3 (15.0%)	
I am confident of diagnosing patients with common mental health problems (e.g. anxiety, depression, sleeping disorder)						
Strongly disagree	4 (12.1%)	0 (0.0%)	Z= -4.082, p< 0.001	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	Z= 0.000, p= 1.000
Disagree	18 (54.5%)	8 (24.2%)		5 (25.0%)	5 (25.0%)	
Agree	10 (30.3%)	22 (66.7%)		13 (65.0%)	13 (65.0%)	
Strongly agree	1 (3.0%)	3 (9.1%)		2 (10.0%)	2 (10.0%)	
I am confident of managing patients with common mental health problems						
Strongly disagree	4 (12.1%)	0 (0.0%)	Z= -2.854, p= 0.004	0 (0.0%)	1 (5.0%)	Z= -1.134, p= 0.257
Disagree	21 (63.6%)	15 (45.5%)		8 (40.0%)	4 (20.0%)	
Agree	7 (21.2%)	17 (51.5%)		12 (60.0%)	14 (70.0%)	
Strongly agree	1 (3.0%)	1 (3.0%)		0 (0.0%)	1 (5.0%)	
I have enough time in my practice to handle patients with mental health problems						
Strongly disagree	3 (9.4%)	4 (12.5%)	Z= -0.617, p= 0.537	2 (10.5%)	0 (0.0%)	Z= -0.577, p= 0.564
Disagree	18 (56.3%)	15 (46.9%)		8 (42.1%)	10 (52.6%)	
Agree	11 (34.4%)	10 (31.3%)		8 (42.1%)	8 (42.1%)	
Strongly agree	0 (0.0%)	3 (9.4%)		1 (5.3%)	1 (5.3%)	
My experiences regarding patients with mental health problems						
Generally positive	11 (34.4%)	8 (25.0%)	Z= -0.832, p= 0.405	3 (15.8%)	7 (36.8%)	Z= 1.633, p= 0.102
Neutral	20 (62.5%)	23 (71.9%)		16 (84.2%)	12 (62.3%)	
Generally negative	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.1%)		0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	

Percentages refer to valid responses only. The pair of responses would be excluded in the analysis if either the response to pre- or post-course (extracted post-course or follow-up) was missing.

*No pre-specified percentages for selection in this question. Respondents were allowed to write the percentages themselves. These percentages were grouped as ranges here.

OBJECTIVE

To investigate the impact of a Western mental health training course for Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practitioners.

METHODS

A combined qualitative and quantitative approach was applied to examine the changes in the TCM practitioners' clinical practice characteristics and attitudes. Focus groups and structured questionnaire surveys were conducted to compare their responses before and after the Course.

RESULTS

After a 10-week training course conducted by psychiatrists and family physicians, there were significant changes in confidence of the TCM practitioners for diagnosis (33% being confident before the Course vs 76% after the Course) and management (24% vs 55%) of common mental health problems. The causal effects of better classifications to recognition of mental health problems were explained by the qualitative responses. Proportion of TCM practitioners being confident of referring mental health patients to other healthcare professionals doubled from 25% to 50% after the Course. Nonetheless, there was no significant change in percentage of these patients being recommended to Western doctors due to a lack of formal referral channel.

CONCLUSIONS

Western mental health training for TCM practitioners has positive impact on their clinical practice. However, the practical barriers in making referrals highlight the need of closer collaboration between conventional and traditional medicine.

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