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Abstract

INTRODUCTION

Stress symptoms, burnout, poor mental health and long-term sick leave related to these are major problems in Sweden and elsewhere. Evidence-based prevention and treatment efforts are lacking. Research indicates that stress related health problems primarily could be conceptualized as deficiencies in recovery responses between stress periods rather than high level of stress responses per se. Therefore it is relevant to examine whether it is effective to intervene the recovery behavior – instead of the stress behavior - of people with stress symptoms.

OBJECTIVES

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate if a behavioral oriented recovery management intervention could enhance “recovery behaviors” and experiences of recovery and reduce stress related ill health.

METHODS

A group based intervention program focusing exclusively on “recovery behavior” in everyday life (earlier developed and tested in two pilot studies) was evaluated in an experimental group study. The intervention consisted of seven group sessions of 2.5 hours over a period of approximately 10 weeks supplemented by an internet based treatment support system. Self-referred subjects with scores above 24.4 on the Perceived stress scale were randomized to the intervention (n=26) or a waiting-list (n=33).

RESULTS

Statistically significant and clinically relevant effects were achieved for the intervention group compare to the waiting-list group: recovery behaviors and experiences of recovery were increased, and levels of perceived stress, worry, anxiety, depression and exhaustion were decreased.

DISCUSSION

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These results are in line with two previous pilot studies that we have done. A behavioral and recovery oriented intervention seems to be effective to increase the recovery of the individual and decrease stress related ill health. There are reasons to continue to explore the potential of recovery-oriented interventions for example for different populations (such as people with more extensive clinical health problems) and in different contexts.