Internet-Based Support and Coaching for Young People with Neuropsychiatric Disorders – a Follow-up of an Intervention

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Background: Young people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and/or ADHD often go untreated due to not meeting referral criteria for mental health services and/or lack of appropriate interventions. Existing treatments are not adapted to the needs of individuals with NPD. Difficulties with social interaction, initiation difficulties, and impairments in executive function are commonly shared characteristics that can complicate visits at a clinic, i.e. traditional treatment, for this patient group. Internet-based chat support could offer a potential complement to other interventions for young people who find face-to-face meetings in a clinic stressful.

Aim: To evaluate an intervention and its implementation at three treatment sites in order to facilitate future implementation of the intervention in regular practice.

Method: Coordinators, coaches, and a project manager at three different treatment sites were interviewed about their experiences of offering and implementing internet-based support and coaching to young people with ASD and/or ADHD. The interviews formed the basis for an evaluation of the intervention and its implementation from an organisational theory perspective.

Conclusions: The intervention has qualitative and quantitative benefits compared with traditional face-to-face treatment at a clinic. Technical difficulties, culturally founded resistance, and lack of awareness are reported problems that need to be addressed for the intervention to be successfully implemented in regular practice. The research team experienced difficulties in recruiting participants to the trial. These were attributed to the intensity and duration of the intervention as well as to the patient stock available at the participating treatment units. Matching suitable participants with the intervention will be a key task in an extended implementation. Gatekeepers and management are identified as key actors in the implementation of the new method.

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