

Efficacy of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy on the Perceived Stress and Sense of Coherence in the Patients with Ulcerative Colitis

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Extended Abstract

Aim

Chronic inflammatory bowel diseases (IBDI) exert negative impact on the overall well-being of society, placing significant psychological and financial strain on its members. Ulcerative colitis (UC), a prevalent type of inflammatory bowel disease, is characterized by inflammation of the colon and rectum. Abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhea, anemia, and malnutrition are all symptoms of UC. These symptoms significantly affect the overall quality of life of the patients. Moreover, the treatment of UC is contingent upon the disease's extent and severity (mild, moderate, severe), as well as its stage (active, remission), all of which contribute to the psychological distress experienced by UC patients. Consequently, there is evidence to suggest that UC induces perceived stress and has negative effects on patients' mental health. Perceived stress refers to a psychological condition or state in which individuals perceive a peril to their physical and mental health. A sense of coherence (SOC), conversely, is a comprehensive outlook on life comprised of cognitive, behavioral, and motivational components that enable people to adapt to stressors and maintain their health. Among the numerous psychological therapeutic and educational approaches that aim to ameliorate the mental, social, physiological, and emotional aspects of individuals afflicted with chronic illnesses is acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). Patients with UC were the target population for this study, and its objective was to determine whether ACT improved their sense of coherence and perceived stress.

Methodology

A quasi-experimental design comprising a pre-test, post-test, control group, and a two-month follow-up period was utilized for the study. All patients diagnosed with ulcerative colitis who were referred to the Digestion and Liver Research Center during the fall and winter of 2019-2020 (under the supervision of Alzahra Hospital) constituted the statistical population. A total of 25 patients who were diagnosed with ulcerative colitis were enrolled in the experimental and control groups via random assignment using the purposive sampling method. Over the course of two months, the experimental group participated in ten ACT sessions, each lasting seventy-five minutes. The applied questionnaires utilized in this study comprised a Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and a Sense of Coherence Questionnaire (SCQ). The data obtained from the study were subjected to analysis using mixed ANOVA via SPSS-23.

Findings

The experimental and control groups had respective means of age 39.40 ± 3.44 and 37.66 ± 3.19 years. Patients with ulcerative colitis experienced a significant reduction in perceived stress and an increase in sense of coherence as a consequence of ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion

Based on the results obtained from the present study, it is possible to deduce that ACT may serve as a viable intervention for enhancing a sense of coherence and reducing perceived stress in individuals diagnosed with ulcerative colitis. This is achieved through the utilization of six primary processes: acceptance, diffusion, context as self, relationship with the present moment, values, and committed activities. By encouraging patients with UC to embrace their own states and introduce new values and concepts into their lives, ACT actually assists them in ceasing intellectual and cognitive avoidance. This process facilitates the attainment of a heightened state of inner tranquility and a reduction in tension.

Keywords: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Perceived Stress, Sense of Coherence, Ulcerative Colitis.