

Addiction Exchange

News from the worlds of
clinical practice and research

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Welcome to *Addiction Exchange*, a forum for the exchange of clinical practice and research information among clinicians, scientists, educators, and administrators in the field of addiction. In this issue, we discuss NIDA's National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network (CTN) and hear a practitioner's viewpoint of the project. Ned Snead, Chesterfield County, Virginia's Substance Abuse Services Program Manager, talks about his experience with the CTN study on Motivational Interviewing in which his Community Treatment Program (CTP) is taking part. This particular CTN kickoff is January 18, 2001.

The Clinical Trials Network was judged as the "single mechanism most likely to improve drug abuse treatment in the U.S." in a 1998 Institute of Medicine report, "Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice." The CTN involves multiple "research nodes," essentially partnerships between regional research centers - usually universities - and community-based treatment programs (CTPs) in their area, with the CTPs carrying out highly structured substance abuse treatments in community-based settings. By way of these pairings, the effectiveness of university-based research studies can be carried out in multisite, real-life environments. The CTN will also forge partnerships between NIDA, researchers and treatment practitioners in order to improve the quality of treatment nationally. Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and Johns Hopkins University, together with a number of CTPs in the region, make up the Mid-Atlantic research node of the CTN.

We recently spoke with Ned Snead on his CTP's study dealing with Motivational Interviewing (MI), a brief therapy which gently helps clients, in a non-confrontational style, work through their ambivalence about treatment until they are motivated to change. Chesterfield County CSB's clinical trial will compare the effectiveness of a single MI intervention used to draw a client into treatment vs. treatment as usual.

What has been accomplished so far in the study?

The plans for the MI protocol are being finalized and we are awaiting IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval. We have been meeting biweekly as a team to plan the project. These meetings have been very positive as CSB clinical staff and VCU faculty get to know one another better. We are all looking forward to a major event that will occur on January 18th, when we will be giving staff and invited guests an introduction to the CTN and the MI study. The CTN Kickoff will be a morning activity during which materials will be distributed, guest speakers will make presentations and a continental breakfast will be served. One-hundred invitations were sent out for the kickoff festivities and we anticipate a good turn-out. After this orientation, selected clinical and research staff will participate in specific MI protocol training. By early February, we hope to have completed the training for the six therapists and will conduct a small pilot test of the procedures to be followed in the study. Soon after, we will begin the study proper, enrolling 100 clients to participate in the study over the course of the next year.

What is the purpose of the study?

We will compare the effect of the MI intervention versus treatment as usual, looking specifically at retaining clients in treatment and reducing their substance abuse.

What has it been like getting involved in a major grant project?

I'm extremely excited and pleased and proud of being selected to be involved in this process. To my knowledge, it's the first joint research project between community treatment programs and institutions of higher learning.

What's it been like working with university people?

Very rewarding. I've found them to be very friendly, very inquisitive, supportive of what we're currently doing, and helpful in helping us at look at and design ways that we can participate.

How has it impacted your staff so far?

People are aware of it, are interested, and are volunteering to participate because they know they'll have an opportunity to receive some intensive training, and it won't cost us anything.

What are your hopes for this project?

I hope that it's a positive learning experience regardless of the outcome, and that we'll benefit from the knowledge gained and be able to improve the quality of services that we provide the citizens of Chesterfield County.

Discuss this topic further on the Addiction Exchange Forum at: <http://www.mid-attc.org/wwwboard/wwwboard.shtml>

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