



# Relapse Prevention Group Outcomes & Access to Care for Organ Transplant Candidates

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## Background/Significance

- Candidates for liver transplant undergo psychological evaluation prior to listing; those who endorse current/remote histories of substance misuse are required to complete six sessions of relapse prevention (RP) prior to transplant listing.
- Use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for RP is supported by the research (Kahn, 2016); however, data is limited regarding RP in the transplant population.
- Some may struggle to locate and engage in the appropriate treatment, which is a barrier to transplantation.
- Transplant psychology team created a six-week group intervention emphasizing RP with the goal of offering more comprehensive services to patients while converting to candidacy.
- Pilot study was completed to assess the efficacy of the intervention.

## Methods

- Patients completed self-report measures including: Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7), and The Stages of Change Readiness and Treatment Eagerness Scale (SOCRATES) during the first and sixth session.
- A retrospective chart review was conducted to compare pre- and post- intervention scores.



## Results

- A total of 12 candidates completed the group intervention.
- All were male and had at least one substance use disorder diagnosis.
- Five had a prior mental health diagnosis.
- Results indicated no significant differences in responses on the PHQ-9 ( $p = .74$ ), GAD-7 ( $p = .15$ ), or SOCRATES ( $p = .27$ ) after the intervention.
- However, those with prior mental health treatment reported that they had taken steps to make a positive change in their behavior after the intervention, as measured by the SOCRATES ( $p = .04$ ).
- Results are related to the 'Taking Steps' subscale on the SOCRATES measure.

## Discussion

- The results of this pilot study indicate that candidates with prior mental health treatment endorsed significantly greater steps taken in their RP journeys than candidates without prior treatment.
- This suggests techniques may more readily adopt newly learned skills in RP.
- Although the hypotheses of this pilot study were otherwise not supported, this study provides compelling data for the efficacy of the CBT protocol for RP.
- The lack of statistical significance of the results is likely due in part to small sample size.
- It is anticipated that with a larger sample, greater significance will be found.
- Additionally, patients had the opportunity to engage in RP housed within the Transplant Institute allowing for conversion to candidacy in a controlled environment.

## Conclusion/Implications

- Among the barriers for transplant listing may be the need to complete substance misuse treatment.
- The pilot program may demonstrate the benefit of an integrated RP group to help convert potential transplant candidates achieve candidacy for transplant listing.

## References

- Khan, A., Tansel, A., White, D. L., Kayani, W. T., Bano, S., Lindsay, J., ... & Kanwal, F. (2016). Efficacy of psychosocial interventions in inducing and maintaining alcohol abstinence in patients with chronic liver disease: A systematic review. *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology*, 14, 191-202.