

Cognitive Behavioural-Art program: a feasibility and acceptability study in an Australian residential early parenting centre.

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Objectives/Background

Art Therapy is an effective non-verbal therapy¹ with potential application for perinatal mental health problems. There is a high prevalence of clinically-significant depression and anxiety among women admitted to Australian residential early parenting services. The CB-Art program, developed in Israel for the perinatal period, combines AT with cognitive behavioural therapy and aims to assist women to recognise and name their thoughts and feelings, which is a precursor to change. The aim of this study was to assess the feasibility, acceptability and safety of CB-Art in a residential early parenting unit.

Methods

A single group pre-and post-test design was used. All women admitted to the unit were invited to participate. Participants took part, in groups of three, in two one-hour, CB-Art sessions facilitated by a Clinical Psychologist during admission. Baseline questionnaires collected demographic information and emotional competence using a standardised measure²; EPDS scores were extracted from the medical record. A brief telephone interview one week after discharge assessed outcomes and program evaluation. Quantitative data were summarised and qualitative data were analysed thematically.

Results

Nine women participated and provided follow-up data. Symptoms of postnatal depression improved but there was no change in emotional competence scores. Qualitative data suggested improvements in reflective capacity and the program was highly evaluated.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings need to be confirmed in a larger controlled study but this preliminary evidence suggests that CB-Art is an acceptable, feasible and safe addition to the residential early parenting program.

Key words

Art therapy; emotional competence; cognitive behaviour therapy

References

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