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Regular Article

Can Stress Management at the Workplace Prevent Depression? A Randomized Controlled Trial

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Key Words

- Stress management
- Workplace
- Depression
- Mental health



Abstract

Background: Stress, mental health and depression at the workplace have emerged as common and significant problems. The effectiveness of a stress-management program at the workplace was investigated. **Methods:** The effectiveness of a stress-management program was examined in workers at a highly stressful workplace using a randomized controlled trial. The 58 workers in the office were randomly assigned into a stress-management group (n = 28) and a control group (n = 30). The stress-management program included lectures on the perception of stress, measures to cope with it, stress-management recording sheets, and e-mail counseling. This program was based on the cognitive behavioral approach. The stress-management program was carried out for 3 months, and perceived work-related stress and psychological symptoms were evaluated using: General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)-30, Center for Epidemiologic Study for Depression (CES-D), the Questionnaire of Work-Related Stress and the Effort-Reward Imbalance Questionnaire. Twenty-one out of the 28 in the stress-management group and all in the control group were successfully followed up. **Results:** In the stress-management group, a significant improvement in the depressive symptoms was observed, compared with the control group in CES-D (p = 0.003 by two-tailed paired t-test, and p = 0.042 by repeated measure analysis of variance). In the multiple regression analysis, the effect of stress management on depressive symptoms at follow-up was significant (p = 0.041), controlling for potential confounding factors. However, the alleviation of perceived occupational stress was limited. **Conclusions:** A stress-management program based on the cognitive behavioral approach at the workplace may have potential for the prevention of depression.

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