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Ear acupuncture for co-occurring substance abuse and borderline personality disorder: an aid to encourage treatment retention and tobacco cessation

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Abstract

Objectives: Retention of individuals with co-occurring borderline personality disorder (BPD) and substance use disorders in treatment is known to be difficult. An outcome study of a tobacco-free 90-day inpatient dual-diagnosis treatment programme that uses several evidenced-based treatments in addition to ear acupuncture (acudetox) was undertaken to determine overall treatment effectiveness.

Methods: Between January 2009 and December 2011, 231 patients were treated in the programme, 88% with nicotine dependence and 79% with personality disorder diagnoses. All patients completing the programme were invited to enrol in a 1-year follow-up study in which they responded to monthly questionnaires to assess outcomes.

Results: 185 patients (80%) successfully completed the programme. There was no correlation between successful programme completion and gender, race, age, primary drug dependence diagnosis or primary psychiatric diagnosis. The use of acudetox was positively correlated with successful completion ($p=0.006$). Of the 78 patients with BPD, 100% of men and 83% of women successfully completed the programme. Their use of acudetox was positively

correlated with successful completion ($p=0.026$). At the end of the year, 140 questionnaires were returned: 51 patients with BPD reported outcomes similar to the group as a whole, with 55% sober and doing well.

Conclusions: The use of acudetox was positively correlated with both successful completion of the programme for those with BPD as well as successful tobacco cessation, which ultimately improves the ability to maintain sobriety.

Keywords: 5-point NADA protocol; Auricular Acupuncture; Borderline Personality Disorder; Substance Abuse Treatment; Tobacco Cessation; Treatment Retention.

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