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Problem solving therapy – treating multimorbidity in general practice

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Background and Aim: Multimorbidity is an increasing challenge in general practice. Clinical guidelines tend to target individual diseases and do not cover the complexity of problems handled by general practitioners (GP) in daily clinical practice. The aim of this pilot study is to examine the feasibility and effectiveness of teaching Danish GPs problem solving techniques.

Method: Twenty general practices volunteered for a course on problem solving. Clinics were matched two and two with regard to population size and number of referrals for psychological treatment and were randomized to either “problem solving therapy” or “treatment as usual”. Outcome measures: changes in problem-solving attitudes among GPs, changes in the patients’ assessment of benefits of problem solving therapy, and changes in the use of health services at the clinic, i.e. referral for psychological treatment, use of psychopharmacological medications and total costs.

Results: Fifteen GPs (10 female and 5 male; mean age: 52.4 years) participated in the course on problem solving. Problem solving attitude was assessed before study entry. A standardized self-report instrument for assessment of problem solving attitude (PSA) was used. The PSA included 10 items (all scored 0-4), with 40 being the optimal problem solving attitude. The initial testing revealed a mean score of 26 (SD: 4, range: 26-35).

Conclusions: Included GPs demonstrated room for improvement in problem solving attitude. Changes in PSA scores will be presented at the conference. Preliminary results on changes in patient reported outcomes will also be presented.