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Group Therapy for University Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Introduction:

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are a group of neurodevelopmental syndromes characterized by deficits in communication, social interaction and imagination. These symptoms are present in the early developmental period, but may not be fully obvious until social demands exceed the child's limited capacities. In spite of its early presenting, this condition is not diagnosed until adult stage. In Japan, many patients with ASD were diagnosed after entering university, however, few treatment options are available. The aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of group therapy in university students with ASD.

Methods:

A one –group, pre-intervention-post-intervention design was adapted for this study. All patients with ASD were recruited from Shizuoka University. The group therapy programs consisted of cognitive behavioral therapy and recreational activity. Outcome measures were Beck Depression Inventory-Second Edition, Quality of Life Inventory, State Trait Anxiety Inventory and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Results:

There were eight participants, five males and three females. Their ages were from 19 years old to 22 years old. All participants had over 90 % of attendance in the six-month group therapy.

Conclusions:

These preliminary results suggest that the group therapy can improve social competence for some students with ASD. More research is needed to draw more sturdy conclusions, especially with respect to improvements in quality of life.