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Computer-Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Improves Long-Term Substance Abuse Treatment Outcomes

In an article in the February issue of "*Drug and Alcohol Dependence*", researchers reported on the benefits conferred by a computer-based cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) program on substance dependence treatment outcomes. CBT is an effective treatment for substance dependence and has been shown to reduce long-term drug abuse. Unfortunately, standard CBT is not widely available in community-based settings because it requires personnel with special training to administer. This means that many substance abusers motivated to stop using drugs do not have access to this treatment.

Kathleen M. Carroll, Ph.D. and colleagues from the Division of Substance Abuse at the Yale University School of Medicine previously documented short-term efficacy of computer-based CBT at reducing drug use. This new study assessed long-term (6-month) treatment outcomes in patients who received biweekly access to computer-based CBT treatment in addition to treatment as usual (weekly individual and group counseling sessions).

The study found that compared to patients who participated in counseling and group sessions only, those with access to computer-based CBT had better short- and long-term outcomes including fewer days of drug use and longer abstinence periods. The authors noted that documenting efficacy and durability of computer-based CBT supports broader implementation of this treatment since it may help reduce the public health burden attributable to substance abuse.

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