C3.4: Unintended Consequences: The Impact of Social Relationships on Outcomes of a Health Promotion Intervention For Women with Fibromyalgia Syndrome

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Abstract:
Introduction: Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is a poorly understood chronic condition that primarily affects women age 20 - 60 years. Symptoms, including widespread pain, fatigue, sleep disturbances and mood disturbances, may lead to social isolation. The purpose of this presentation is to describe how social relationships formed among women in both the intervention and attention control groups may have influenced the outcomes of the RCT of the Lifestyle Counts health promotion intervention. We will integrate findings of a descriptive qualitative study conducted to examine research participants’ experiences in the clinical trial with the quantitative outcomes of the RCT.

Method(s): Participants in the RCT were 187 women age 24 to 74 years with physician verified FMS (81% white, 15% Hispanic). The Lifestyle Counts intervention consisted of lifestyle change classes, individualized goal setting and follow-up supportive phone calls. Moderately structured
Interviews were conducted with 18 women who completed the trial (12 from the intervention group and 6 from the control group). Data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis. A main category in the data concerned relationships with the other research participates.

Results: Both the treatment and attention control groups demonstrated significant improvement (p < .05) on measures of self-efficacy for health promoting behaviors, health promoting activity and perceived health-related quality of life over 8 months. Participants in both research groups expressed feeling alone having FMS. The most valuable part of participating in the study for most women was sharing experiences and strategies with the other women. Participants were aware of similarities and differences among themselves with regard to their life circumstances, severity of symptoms, and attitudes and management of their FMS. Negative, as well as positive, perceptions of fellow participants were motivators for changes in health behaviors and attitudes in both research groups.

Discussion & Conclusions: Interactions with other participants may have contributed to improvements in outcome measures. Social relationships are important and often overlooked components of RCTs of health promotion interventions that may influence outcomes in both groups.

Abstract History:
This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

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