

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING – AN AID FOR DENTAL PRACTITIONERS

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Abstract

Motivational Interviewing is a patient centric therapeutic approach which aims to bring about change in the patients behavior by exploring their ambiguities and increase their commitment towards change. It developed as a result of working with addictions and has been extended to areas in health which need psychological motivation especially in dentistry in the field of Oral hygiene maintenance. It has shown great effectiveness in motivating patients for oral health and maintenance of oral hygiene. This technique needs to be introduced for the Dental practitioners and students so as to train them to be better communicators and motivators.

Motivational interviewing (MI) is a clinical and therapeutic technique which is a highly patient-centric directed approach that supports a patient's readiness to change by exploring their uncertainties and hesitations if any about doing so. This tends to make the patient more compliant, motivated and committed to change. In relation to dentistry, Motivational Interviewing has shown very effective in promoting and maintaining oral health behavior; aiding in the patient quitting smoking; and helping in altering his/her behavior towards health.

Key Words: Addictions, Motivational Intervening (MI), Oral Hygiene Maintenance.

Introduction

MI relevant for health professionals

Motivational interviewing (MI) is a complete client-centric therapeutic approach, which relies heavily on the patients motivation and has been found to be very effective for bringing about changes in healthcare as it aids to increase the clients commitment to the whole change process and allows them to sort out their ambiguities.¹ It has been found to be very effective when used as a starting point of any treatment, for example in cognitive behavioural therapy, and the effects of the same have been shown to endure over time.² This endurance is because of motivational interviewing effects on the ability to retain of what is learned and subsequently on the adherence to the treatment. Motivational Interviewing is very relevant to the professionals in the health care industry, especially those working in the hospitals or poly clinics where, as Miller and Rollnick³ point out, "motivational issues in patient behaviour change are quite common". Research on this has also shown that patients working with and treated by MI-trained healthcare practitioners were more motivated towards change than others.

Application to dentistry

Motivational Interviewing developed as a result of work being done with patients having various addictions, and has in more recent times spread to other areas of healthcare where the psychological aspect of motivation is of more importance for e.g. chronic illness, chronic pain management, health behaviour monitoring, eating disorders, and promotion of health and healthy lifestyles. The areas of promotion of health and the monitoring of health behaviour are of great importance to the dental practitioners as maintenance of oral health is of paramount importance in the success of any dental

avoidance behaviour,⁴ with focus primarily on the prevention of childhood caries.^{5,6} Motivational interviewing is being used extensively to encourage a patients change of behaviour by showing positive results and their relation to the patients behavioural changes;⁴⁻⁷ for example, in smoking cessation and improvement in the outcome of periodontal therapy⁸ and reduced risk of oral cancer.⁹ Therefore, it has become very important for dental practitioners to be clinically competent to deal with these risk factors associated with behaviour and be able to promote good oral health practices.

What is MI?

Motivational interviewing is a patient based therapeutic and directed approach that helps and supports the patients readiness to change by exploring their uncertainties about the process and by doing so increasing their motivation to change. It also helps them to commit to the process of change.³ This approach fits very well with the health promotional activities, whose aim is to enable the patient to increase their control over their health and to improve on it. This gives the control back to the patient thereby empowering hi/her. This achieves the key objective of improving the quality of life.¹⁰ Enabling is the main strategy for health promotion as identified by the Ottawa Charter.¹¹ A very important part of this process is that there should be a supportive environment with access to information, opportunities, and life skills with which to make healthy choices. There has been research which has indicated that Motivational interviewing has had a particularly positive effect on the patients who have traditionally been seen as 'resistant', 'angry' or 'oppositional'.^{3,12} With the Motivational interviewing approach, the healthcare practitioner views these adjectives as a process for growth and interpersonal

interaction, and not as a character flaw or a negative patient trait. Motivational interviewing is a very skilful clinical method and not just a set of techniques; it is more of a being than a doing. A good understanding of the core beliefs of Motivational interviewing, as mentioned by Miller and Rollnick's, (fig 1) is essential for the healthcare practitioner to follow the approach.³



Fig 1: Core Beliefs of MI

Importance of ‘spirit’

The ‘Spirit’ encompasses the patient’s inherent motivation to process the change rather than the change being imposed on him or her. Therefore, the practitioner’s task is to support the client in examining and resolving the conflicting ideas, emotions and attitudes which hamper and make the patient resistant to change. The patient’s task is to resolve his/her uncertainties and accept the process. Based on the Rogerian¹³ humanistic approach at the core of which is a firm understanding of the human condition that is the need for positive regard, empathy, and genuineness in order to provide a safe and secure environment in which to explore ambivalence and resistance. ‘Spirit’ involves the integration of the core principles of partnership, evocation and autonomy.³ (fig 2). If these principles are lacking, the practitioner’s role can become merely one of conducting an intellectual exercise.



Fig 2: Key Principles of MI

Aligning MI to training

‘Spirit’ is the guiding philosophy for training practitioners in Motivational interviewing technique. This guiding principle forms a major part of the training. This can only be achieved in practice by learning from the practitioners interactions with the patient. Therefore, most Motivational interviewing training has always been focused on practitioners who have regular contact with patients. However, this technique can be introduced to the trainee dental practitioners at an early stage in their professional development, as they have contact with patients generally from the third year of their Bachelors degree. This provides them with an excellent time to improve their communication skills and by integrating them with Motivational interviewing practice, provides them with the necessary skills to support changes in behaviour. This process will train the practitioners to go beyond the skills of ‘ask, advise and refer’.¹⁴

MI Training Programmes in various Dental Colleges.

The crucial step in this endeavour would be to review the philosophy of Motivational interviewing and its alignment with the philosophy of the existing programme, in this case Behavioural Science Applied to Dentistry.¹⁵ Next would be to carry out MI Level-1 Pilot Training with advanced dental practitioners and dental hygiene tutors to create a pool of trainers. The relevance for dental practitioners is that by participating in the Motivational interviewing programme, they will gain the skills necessary to engage with patients and support them in their endeavour to change; trainee dental practitioners will increase their interpersonal skills, so they can aid in bringing about the necessary healthcare behavioural changes and hence bring about a sea change in perspective regarding healthcare change.

The Motivational interviewing approach helps the dental practitioners to encourage the patients to speak about their doubts which can lead to the generation of self-motivational statements. This helps them to deal with resistance and to develop a readiness to change. Once the resistance is overcome a systematic plan can be formulated to develop and maintain the change. (fig 3). The key learning outcomes are to introduce dental practitioners to Motivational interviewing and the Stages of Change, also known as the Trans-theoretical Model (TTM)¹⁶ (fig 4) in order to assist the dental practitioner to determine the appropriate stage for the patient and to develop and enhance the basic communication skills which would aid in generating empathy towards the patient, avoiding of argumentative situations, taking resistance if any in the stride, and helping the patient become self-efficient. Participating in the Motivational interviewing programme, the practitioners gain the skills necessary to support and engage the patient to develop his/her personal skills and bring about the required behavioural changes which will aid the patient to maintain his/her health .

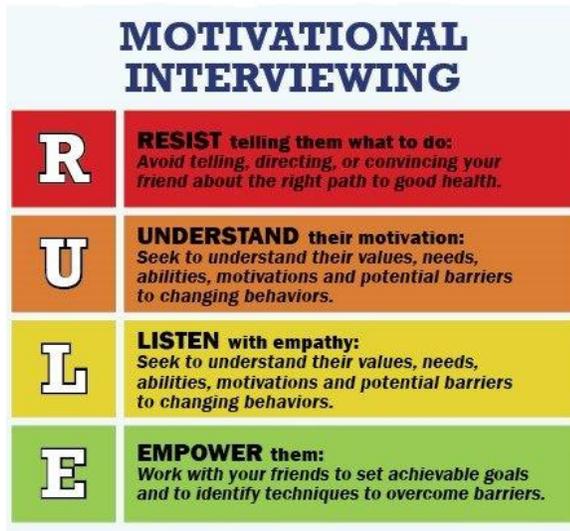


Fig 3: Rules of MI



Fig 4: Stages of Change

Conclusion

In conclusion the Motivational interviewing approach offers a lot to the dental practitioner, in both the patients behaviour change and promotion of health and healthy habits. Motivational interviewing is an approach that can increase the dental practitioner's interpersonal communication skills at any stage of profession. Training in Motivational interviewing should be carried out for dental practitioners at all levels especially undergraduates as it has been suggested that there are positive results in terms of learning for trainee dental practitioners at an undergraduate level. Also there has been a change in the pattern of dental healthcare practice and training which involves a more patient-centered approach.¹⁷

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