

Does Rewards for Sobriety Work for Youth? A Randomized Controlled Trial of Contingency Management with Adolescents

Category: Poster Presentation (in person)

Abstract Body

Contingency management (CM) is a behavioural intervention that may be used as an adjunct therapy for patients receiving addiction and mental health treatment. It involves providing patients with a tangible reward (e.g., gift cards or prizes) when objective evidence that a behavioural change has occurred (e.g., a negative urine drug screen to show abstinence from substance use). CM has been found to be an effective behavioural intervention for a variety of treatment target goals, including increasing attendance to appointments and increasing abstinence rates from various substances. Despite the generally promising results that CM protocols are an efficacious treatment across diverse populations with a variety of substance use concerns, CM is largely underutilized as a substance use disorder treatment within community-based healthcare settings and with patients with comorbid mental health problems. The current study utilized a low-cost, randomized clinical trial design to determine if implementing a CM protocol would enhance outcomes (i.e., result in an increased number of therapy sessions attended and/or reduce substance use over a 12-week intervention when compared to treatment as usual) in a publicly funded treatment centre for adolescents with concurrent mental health and substance use concerns. Sixty-two participants were enrolled and randomly assigned to receive CM protocol (n = 32) or TAU (n = 30). Independent samples t-tests were used to assess differences between the groups pertaining to treatment attendance and substance using behaviours. All between-group differences were statistically non-significant, with participants in the CM group and TAU attending a similar number of therapy sessions ($t(60) = -0.07, p = 0.94$) and reporting a similar proportion of substance using days per week across the intervention ($t(56) = 0.77, p = 0.45$). The results of the current study contrast the majority of previously published findings that found CM to be an efficacious treatment for encouraging higher abstinence rates and treatment attendance in adolescent populations. The majority of previous CM research has restricted their samples to those with a single concern; however, these findings may speak to the implications for the use of CM within a clinically complex sample.

Key Words

- Adolescent/Young Adult Populations
- Behavioural Interventions
- Concurrent Disorders

- Substance Use Disorder (general)
- Treatment Models/Programs

Learning Objective # 1

Attendees will learn how Contingency Management can be provided within a publicly funded health care system.

Learning Objective # 2

Attendees will learn about the complexities of doing contingency management with youth presenting with mental health and substance use concerns.

Reference # 1

Petry, N. (2011). Contingency management: What it is and why psychiatrists should want to use it. *The Psychiatrist*, 35(5), 161-163.

Reference # 2

Davis, D., Kurti, A., Skelly, J., Redner, R., White, T., & Higgins, S. (2016). A review of the literature on contingency management in the treatment of substance use disorders, 2009–2014. *Preventive Medicine*, 92, 36-46 doi: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2016.08.008.

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