



INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION PROPOSAL
2004 APA Annual Convention

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1. Title of presentation: Unwinding After Work: Substance Abuse Risk Identification and Health Promotion

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Second index term: 65 Substance Abuse

2. Principle author: Camille R. Patterson, PhD

Mailing address: Dept of Small Business Research Division, Tarrant Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, 1701 W. Freeway, Suite 1, Fort Worth, TX 76102

E-mail address: c.patterson@tarrantcouncil.org

Phone/Fax number: (817) 332-6950, Ext. 252 (office), (817) 735-8546 (home), (817) 332-2828 (fax)

Affiliation: Tarrant Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse, Fort Worth, TX

Membership status: APAGS Member

3. Coauthors:

(1) Joel B. Bennett, PhD Organizational Wellness & Learning Systems, Fort Worth, TX

(2) Wyndy L. Wiitala, PhD Tarrant Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse, Fort Worth, TX

4. Accommodation request: None

5. Preferred mode of presentation: Paper Session

6. Special equipment will be used in presentation: Personal Computers

7. Summary to be posted on the APA Web site: Yes

8. Division to submit this proposal: 38 - Health Psychology

Unwinding After Work: Substance Abuse Risk Identification and Health Promotion

Introduction

Research in workplace health promotion has shown that employees most likely to benefit from workplace wellness programs are those who have a greater number of risks and fewer protective factors (e.g., Pelletier, 2002). In addition, employees may be more willing to self-report their use of alcohol or cigarettes to unwind from stress than they would be to directly report the amount of alcohol use or tobacco (Patterson, Bennett, Wiitala, 2004).

Workplace stress creates a need to relax and unwind from one's day. Employees frequently feel the effects of work stress long after they leave work. Difficulty unwinding from stress relates to several work and health problems including amount of alcohol use (Delaney, Grube, Greiner, Fisher, & Ragland, 2002). Drinking, drugs, and tobacco are often used as strategies to improve mood and reduce unwinding time even though unwinding with these substances may be ineffective or harmful (McMahon, Kouzekanani, DeMarco, & Kusel, 1992; Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister, 2001; Penny & Robinson, 1986). While unwinding with substances (alcohol, drugs, and tobacco) may represent health risks, positive unwinding behaviors (exercise, meditation, prayer, time with friends, reading) can serve as healthy alternatives. Many of these positive unwinding behaviors provide emotional and physical health benefits.

Despite the high impact of substance abuse on employees and productivity (Frone, 2003; Normand, Lempert & O'Brien, 1994), prevention and stress management education programs are rare (Hersch, Cook, Deitz, & Trudeau, 2000; McMahan, Wells, Stokols, Phillips, & Clitheroe, 2001). Workplace prevention may be a way to encourage employees to reduce substance use, particularly among workers who are at high risk for substance abuse. We will look at two types of workplace prevention training programs to determine each program's impact in increasing positive and decreasing substance stress unwinding (compared to a control). Team Awareness for Small Businesses (Team Awareness-SB) seeks to decrease substance abuse by improving social climate and promoting positive social norms while Choices in Health Promotion (Choices-HP) promotes healthy alternatives to substance abuse in addition to improving work environment.

The first training, Team Awareness for Small Business (Team Awareness-SB), was based on Team Awareness, a SAMHSA model program which has been shown to both improve protective factors for substance abuse - such as workplace social health, peer referrals, and EAP utilization - and to reduce problem drinking (Bennett & Lehman, 2003; Bennett, Patterson, Reynolds, Wiitala, & Lehman, 2003). Also, Team Awareness directly addresses the topic of stress, the social use of alcohol by coworkers, and ways of getting help for problems.

Choices-HP promotes individual wellness and was custom designed for each business based on a needs assessment with business operators. Choices-HP combined elements from the SAMHSA model programs, Team Awareness and Healthy Workplace, which takes a positive approach towards substance abuse prevention using a health promotion framework (Cook & Youngblood, 1990; Hersch et al., 2000). Choices-HP includes activities and information on a variety of personal, family, and work health issues.

The current study has a three-fold purpose. First, we attempt to identify those specific risk and protective factors that will help prevention programmers better focus their efforts on those workers who are either at greater risk for substance misuse or who lack the information and resources to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This study evaluates the degree to which certain characteristics of employees (e.g. age, ethnicity, marital status) and their occupation (e.g., amount of safety sensitive tasks, hours worked a week) relate to unwinding behavior. Second, as Patterson et al. (2004) have found, use of substances to unwind appear to be a reliable proxy measure for actual substance use.

Accordingly, we assess proxy reliability within identified high-risk samples. Third, we conducted an experimental study using prevention programs to determine whether the identified risks and protective factors mediate the effectiveness of prevention. In prevention research, scientists attempt to distinguish interventions that are either universal, selective, or indicated in their scope. The results of this study will help us better determine whether newly developed workplace prevention programs have special impact for selected populations.

Procedure

Participants (N = approximately 1200) were employees of small businesses (< 500 employees) in industries that were identified as high risk (SAMHSA, 1999). Businesses were randomly assigned to Team Awareness-SB, Choices-HP, or a no-training control group. Participants were surveyed approximately two weeks before and after the training (four weeks apart for control group) and six months after training.

Self-reports of unwinding behaviors were collected two weeks before and after the training (or four weeks apart for control group) and six months after the training. Additional data was collected on demographic information, safety climate, stress, and substance use and abuse.

Both trainings were given in single 4-hour sessions and businesses participated together in groups of approximately 10-35 employees. Team Awareness-SB and Choices-HP conditions were compared to a control group to determine if these prevention and wellness trainings could change how workers relax and unwind from stress. Team Awareness-SB trainings included communication exercises, group discussion, and role-playing activities to practice peer-referral skills. Choices-HP trainings were customized using components from Team Awareness and information or exercises on stress management, tobacco, exercise/active lifestyle, healthy eating, parenting, time management and spiritual health, safety in the workplace, alcohol and moderate drinking, and prescription drug use.

Analysis and Results

Unwinding variables were examined including their relationship to demographics in general (e.g., ethnicity, marital status) and from work (e.g., hours worked a week, amount of safety concerns, type of position, and type of business). Several aspects of work stress were significantly associated with higher substance unwinding. Working more hours per week was significantly correlated with higher use of alcohol and tobacco to unwind. Also, working at a position that involved safety-oriented tasks was associated with unwinding with tobacco. Other correlations and associations will be presented. Team Awareness-SB significantly improved several types of positive unwinding behaviors in the short-term and was predicted to reduce substance unwinding in the long-term (6-months). Short and long-term results analysis using regression and repeated measures analysis of variance will also be presented.