Project UPLIFT: A Distance Delivered Mindfulness-Based Intervention to Address Depression Among Diverse Populations

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES
Project UPLIFT is a distance-delivered mental health skills program originally designed to address depression among people with co-morbid chronic disease such as epilepsy. People with epilepsy suffer neural impairment, as well as medical, economic, and social hardships as a result of their disability. Depression is a common co-morbid psychiatric disorder among people with epilepsy that often goes unrecognized and untreated. Development of Project UPLIFT was funded through the CDC, and the NIH funded a modified version for prevention. Both versions were evaluated through focus groups and in randomized controlled trials for people with epilepsy. Project UPLIFT has also been used, and adapted when necessary, with several other diverse populations. We will present results on the effectiveness of Project UPLIFT for people with epilepsy, along with findings from the adaptation of Project UPLIFT with African Americans with epilepsy.

Description of UPLIFT
• UPLIFT Acronym: Using Practice and Learning to Increase Favorable Thoughts
• Group mental health intervention for people with co-morbid chronic diseases
• Designed for delivery by Web or telephone
• Manualized program
• Based in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy
• Delivered to groups of six to eight people by trained facilitator, assisted by peer facilitator with same condition

RESULTS
Treatment Study
• Significant increases in knowledge/skills around coping with depression and epilepsy symptoms
• Significant decreases in depressive symptoms

Prevention Study
• Significant increases in knowledge/skills around coping with stress and epilepsy symptoms
• Significant decreases in depressive symptoms; increased life satisfaction
• Incidence of Major Depressive Disorder of 0% for Project UPLIFT group compared to 10.7% in treatment as usual

EIGHT SESSIONS
1. Monitoring Thoughts*
2. Challenging and Changing Thoughts*
3. Coping and Relaxing
4. Attention and Mindfulness
5. The Present as a Calm Place
6. Thoughts as Changeable and Impermanent
7. Pleasure and Reinforcement*
8. Relapse Action Plans

*Sessions emphasizing CBT skills

Cultural Adaptation of Project UPLIFT with African Americans with Epilepsy
• Community Advisory Board (three people with epilepsy; two support providers; two healthcare providers; two community advocates)
• Focus Groups (adult African Americans/Blacks (AA/B) with epilepsy; support persons)
• Intervenes (health care professionals of AA/B with epilepsy)
• Pilot Randomized, Controlled Trial – in progress

CONCLUSIONS
Project UPLIFT is an effective distance-delivered mindfulness-based intervention to address the mental health of people with epilepsy. Project UPLIFT shows promise with various diverse chronic disease populations with co-morbid depressive symptoms, particularly African Americans with epilepsy.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS
Research is ongoing to assess the effectiveness of Project UPLIFT with a variety of other diverse populations. These include caregivers of people with epilepsy, Hispanics with epilepsy, adults and youth with cystic fibrosis, rural pregnant women, and women with cardiovascular disease. Plans for research on using Project UPLIFT with young adults with Sickle Cell Disease and mothers of infants in the NICU are also underway.