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Therapist drift and clinician's experiences of working with people who have eating disorders

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Several studies have suggested that clinicians are reluctant to commit to evidence-based treatment protocols (e.g., Simmons et al., 2008). The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between interpersonal experiences of working therapeutically with people that have eating disorders and therapist drift away from using evidence-based treatment. Cross-sectional information was obtained from clinicians who treat eating disorders (N=165) via an online survey that included questions regarding countertransference, attitudes to evidence-based protocols, and the personal experience of working therapeutically (including emotional avoidance, accommodating and enabling behaviors and rigid therapeutic interactions). Clinicians were also asked to record whether they had a lived experience of an eating disorder themselves. The results supported existing theories that describe therapist drift away from using evidence-based treatments (i.e., Waller, 2009) and highlight the impact that interpersonal factors between clinician and patient have on treatment selection and adherence to protocol. Moreover, the results suggest that problematic interpersonal factors between clinician and patient may be contributing to accommodating and enabling the eating disorder (as per Schmidt & Treasure, 2006; Treasure, 2011)

Biography

Sonja Skocic has extensive experience working in the field of Eating Disorders across various public and private settings in Melbourne Australia. She is currently the Chief Psychologist at Australia's largest private psychiatric hospital The Melbourne Clinic, providing direction and support for staff and leads a team of over 30 Registered Psychologists, Psychology Registrars, and Postgraduate students. Aside from clinical work and supervision, she coordinates training and professional development for Allied Health across the hospital. She is also directly involved in the development and quality improvement of educational and therapeutic programs for patients, students and staff across the hospital.

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