

Effectiveness of Motivational Interviewing in a North Dakota WIC Clinic Setting ABSTRACT

Purpose: To compare the effectiveness of motivational interviewing (MI) and usual counseling approach in affecting behavior change and satisfaction with WIC in WIC clients.

Study design: 2 X 2 factorial approach comparing counseling approach and length of appointment.

Subjects: 557 WIC client families from North Dakota who had at least one of eight targeted behaviors were assigned to one of four groups (usual counseling, 15 minute appointments, usual counseling 30 minute appointments, Motivational Interviewing 15 minute appointments, Motivational Interviewing 30 minute appointment). Methods: All client families were surveyed for eight client behaviors and satisfaction with WIC were compared prior to and after 6 months of counseling. 76 clients participated in one of eight focus groups to discuss the WIC program and the counseling they received. All staff participated in one of two focus interviews to assess their perceptions of their clients and the WIC program. Additionally, staff trained in MI answered questions relating to the effectiveness and comfort with MI.

Results: Clients counseled using Motivational Interviewing approach breastfed longer, weaning infants earlier from the bottle, reducing juice intake in young children and increasing the frequency families ate meals together. Using the usual counseling approach was more effective in persuading mothers to offer low fat milk to their children. Significant differences in the use of non-fat milk consumed by postpartum women, number of hours of television watched per day by young children, and consumption of sweetened beverages between the two approaches were not found. Overall, clients exposed to Motivational Interviewing were more likely to be in compliance with health recommendations. MI clients in the focus groups described communication in two-way terms, as engaging, and centered on their behaviors. Usual care clients described WIC communication style largely as one way from the staff to the client and in terms surrounding services offered. Staff trained in Motivational Interviewing differed in their acceptance of MI as a counseling tool. However, all MI counselors agreed that MI have made them understand their clients better and that it help them address their clients' issues. All MI counselors agreed that some MI techniques, such as reflective listening, have improved their counseling skills, whereas others are too complicated and hard too use. Extending appointments appeared to have little impact on satisfaction with WIC or behavior change.

Conclusions: Motivational Interviewing can be an effective tool both in increasing client satisfaction with the education component of the WIC Program and also initiating positive health behaviors. In particular, it seems that MI is most effective with behaviors that are complex. Seeing MI as one of several tools that can be used to impact client behaviors may make MI more acceptable to WIC nutrition professionals.