

# A controlled evaluation of family behavior therapy in concurrent child neglect an...

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A controlled evaluation of family behavior therapy in concurrent child neglect and drug abuse April 24, A controlled evaluation of family behavior therapy in concurrent child neglect and drug abuse

The study's objective and related work in the field

The study aimed at evaluating effectiveness of a family-based behavioral therapy on treating mothers who have been referred from child protective service for drug abuse and for neglecting their children. Existing literature on the research field shows that a significant number of children have at least one of their parents abusing drugs and drug abuse among parents is increasing among women than among men. Such a level of dependence on drugs has further been associated with child neglect as the affected children lack supervision and the children are exposed to dangers. Experimental studies on behavioral therapies show improvements among parents who have recommended due to physical molestation of their children, an aspect that relates to child neglect. Studies on child neglect have been limited to case studies that show significance of behavioral therapies in managing child neglect and existing experimental studies on child neglects have not focused on persistent drug abuse. The lack of experimental studies on effects of behavioral therapy on child neglect and drug abuse among mothers informed the study (Donohue, et al., 2014).

Applied method

A controlled experimental design was used for the study. The experimental design was a 2\*2\*3 model that identified treatment type (family-based behavioral treatment and treatment as usual), type of neglect (exposure and other types of neglect), and time (baseline, six months and ten months after

randomization). Seventy-two mothers who exhibited drug abuse and child neglect were assigned, randomly into the behavioral therapy and ordinary treatment groups and outcomes measured (Donohue, et al., 2014).

### Results

Family-based behavioral treatment was more effective on improving maltreatment outcomes among mothers whose children had suffered neglect but not exposure to illegal drugs than it was on mothers who had reported child exposure to illegal drugs. It was also more effective than effects of the normal treatment. Family-based behavior therapy was also more effective on improving maltreatment among hard drug users who did not expose their children to drugs than it was on mothers who exposed their children and than the normal treatment. The normal treatment was however, more effective in reducing hard drug abuse among women who exposed their children to drugs than among those who did not expose their children to drugs and more effective than the behavioral treatment. The behavioral therapy was also more effective than the normal treatment in increasing employability, risk of contracting HIV, and incarceration rates (Donohue, et al., 2014).

### Significance

The study, being the first controlled experiment on effects of family based behavior therapy on the child abuse and child neglect, is significant to increasing literature on child protection and improving welfare of mothers who abuse drugs and their families (Donohue, et al., 2014).

### Conclusion

Despite identified challenge in measuring outcomes, the study expands

knowledge on protection of children from neglect and effects of drug abuse among mothers. The study's results are significant because drug abuse and drug addiction is a significant problem in the contemporary society and even though all cases of child neglect may not be reported, many exist and promoting family-based behavioral therapy in the society is likely to reduce both drug abuse, especially among women, and child neglect.

#### Reference

Donohue, B., et al. (2014). A controlled evaluation of family behavior therapy in concurrent child neglect and drug abuse. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 82(4), 706-720.