Critical Analysis on Sensitive Questioning

Critique of substance use

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Abstract

Establishing therapeutic relationships with clients of co-occurring substance abuse is much difficult, yet an integral part of mental health care and rehabilitation (Mueser, et al., 2012). Assessment of client helps counselors and clinicians to assess the degree of severity of complexities and design treatment regimen with accordance to conditions (Delgadillo, et al., 2012). The chance of bias and judgmental conclusion in such cases run high, implicating there must be optimized protocol, which act as a guideline for the assessor or the interviewer. Establishment of good rapport and relationship (therapeutic) is utmost important to win the trust of client and retrieve information which will help in recovery of client (Stieglitz & Raes, 2015). This piece of article critically analyses an interview between pharmacotherapy counselor Jess and her client Steve. The interview was designed by Victoria initiative under dual diagnosis heading and issued as a training material for mental health workers and counselors. The video demonstrates how sensitive questioning should be carried out with clients of dual diagnosis.

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CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON SENSITIVE QUESTIONING

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INTRODUCTION

Establishing therapeutic relationships with clients of co-occurring substance abuse is much difficult, yet an integral part of mental health care and rehabilitation (Mueser, et al., 2012). Assessment of client helps counselors and clinicians to assess the degree of severity of complexities and design treatment regimen with accordance to conditions (Delgadillo, et al., 2012). The chance of bias and judgmental conclusion in such cases run high, implicating there must be optimized protocol, which act as a guideline for the assessor or the interviewer. Establishment of good rapport and relationship (therapeutic) is utmost important to win the trust of client and retrieve information which will help in recovery of client (Stieglitz & Raes, 2015). This piece of article critically analyses an interview between pharmacotherapy counselor Jess and her client Steve. The interview was designed by Victoria initiative under dual diagnosis heading and issued as a training material for mental health workers and counselors. The video demonstrates how sensitive questioning should be carried out with clients of dual diagnosis.

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EXPLORATION OF INTERVIEWERS CONTACT

Interviewers initial contact method as well as mechanism is the best predictor of health outcome in a psychological interview session (Copeland, McNamara, Kelson, & Simpson, 2014). From the video, it was evident Jess introduced herself as assessor who is there for a comprehensive assessment of substance abuse and dual diagnosis of Steve. She greets Steve and speaks three lines about her and starts with the questioning. Although, this is the standard method of interview, there is always room for improvement in case of initial contact. Research suggests clients are more interactive if they found counselors nurturing,

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non-judgmental and empathetic (Feit, Fisher, Cummings, & Peery, 2015). Jess could have established better initial contact by asking general questions about breakfast, about the day's start, planning for the day, etc. The rationale is to bring client in a zone of trust and comfort (Brown, Bennett, Li, & Bellack, 2011). Evidence shows, individuals suffering from dual diagnosis are usually looking down by the society and the community which limits their societal functioning. This in turn affects their self-integrity and self-esteem (Chou, Robb, Clay, & Chronister, 2012). The video shows, the client, although nods to interviewer for a session, he was unable to make eye contact which might be due to low self-esteem. During the initial stage of the interview he looks towards wall clock for time, indicating he might have some works and he might be in a hurry to complete the session (Darghouth, Nakash, O. Miller, & Alegría, 2012). Therefore, taking the client into a therapeutic zone of trust, belief and showing client that they are normal individuals and can be brought to mainstream society with little self help boost their confidence (Hettema & TKirsch, 2011). In the interview session the counselor asks Steve "Have you been to such service before?" Although the guidelines from Victoria initiative about sensitive questioning suggest non-judgmental questions and open ended questions should be asked, the above question indicates it is judgmental and concluding that Steve needs an assessment for his problem. If the question would have been asked – Have you availed any medical service for any ailments or mental health issues? , it would have a greater therapeutic binding effect on the client. In most cases, clients of dual diagnosis are demoralized by society's perception and portray of their personalities as bad guys, therefore the establishment of therapeutic relationship, although very difficult yet it exists for dual diagnosis patients (Van Boekel, Brouwers, Van Weeghel, & Garretsen, 2012). The communication plays the most important role from start to end in an interview session.

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EXAMINATION OF INTERVIEWERS RAPPORT AND RESPECT

Establishing rapport is an important aspect while assessing clients for substance abuse or dual diagnosis. Establishing rapport is a part of a motivational interview usually employed for a certain group of people, but can be implemented in general interviewing session too (Ness, Borg, & Davidson, 2014). Establishment of rapport requires a little bit of information on client's choice, social history or his/her preference for a particular problem or issue (DeVido & Weiss, 2012). In this case, although the interviewer successfully established respect with Steve evident from the total interview, rapport could have been enhanced based upon evidence based literature. Building rapport helps in establishing a working alliance for a longer duration (Clarkson, et al., 2013). Jess introduces the service which she will be providing and clears him through her words that she is there for a normal assessment which Steve acknowledges positively. This indicates the interviewer's establishment of respect and client's acknowledgement of interviewers intentional questioning with respect. As discussed in previous sections, therapeutic alliance is necessary for proper assessment; similarly rapport establishment indicates the interviewers respect to client, his work, and client as a whole different entity (Madson, et al., 2013). It makes the session more interactive by placing client's choice in first priority rather than interviewers goals. Respect for autonomy, genuineness and collaboration helps in establishing rapport. Jess shows good listening skills and engaging communication skills during the whole interview, which is an important part of rapport building too (Prout & Wadkins, 2014). The building of acceptance and safety environment is crucial for rapport establishment which was lacking and it seems counselor jumped to the main issue prematurely, which could have logically placed after establishing therapeutic relationship and rapport.

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INTERVIEWER ADDRESSAL OF BEHAVIORAL CHANGE DURING INTERVIEW

Behavior change is a part of treatment and recovery process which is usually implemented post assessment or screening of client (Sacks, Ries, Ziedonis, & Treatment, 2005). As sensitive questioning is a screening tool, interviewer is not expected to carry out cognitive behavioral therapy to address client coping strategies and enhancement. However, Jess was able to initiate behavioral change process a little bit by asking coping strategies followed by Steve. In the later part of interview, Jess was able to retrieve Steve's family status and how his drinking has affected his separation from kids, which breaks down client and he cries till jess leaves. Although, it was not meant for behavioral change yet it addresses the issue by making him realize that his actions are not helping him. The interview session demonstrates no behavioral change strategy was addressed by a counselor, although she puts open ended questions to know about the Steve opinion on recovery process. Thus, it was a good move from Jess point of view since this was a screening tool; behavioral change strategy cannot be expected in this session (Feit, Fisher, Cummings, & Peery, 2015). Jess strategy is appreciable as she manages to retrieve important information which will assist the team in helping Steve for recovery and rehabilitation.

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INTERVIEWERS IDENTIFICATION OF IMPACT and STRESSES OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

It is very important from client and counselor perspective to know how substance abuse and other conditions affect one life to what degree. This section was well handled by the counselor rather she adheres to the guideline goals, i.e. detection of limits of substance

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abuse and how it impacts. The initial loopholes discussed previously were compensated in these two sections. The counselor initiated on a lighter note asking about his job, part time or full time. Research suggests dual diagnosed clients are more prone to unemployment due to dependence upon substance and resulting behavior (Eddie, 2013). She got to know Steve lost his driving license couple of years back. Her questions about alcohol and frequency with a number guess gave her exact frequency of alcohol intake of her client. She tried to retrieve information about his daily life by asking weekend time and got to know Steve isn't much social. She clears out the issue with client by saying these areas are required to determine how it impacts his life from different aspects. If the total interview session will be analyzed, it was a mix of open ended and closed ended questions. This mix method strategy has been reported to provide much more information than a single method (Daley, 2013). Research evidence suggests assessment sessions must target two priority goals while interviewing such sensitive patients, such as client's understanding of problems, secondly client's understanding of effect of substance abuse or excessive drinking (in this case) on family and social life (Miller & Rollnick, 2012). Jess uses her emotional intelligence to collect every small piece of information such as loosing of driving license, wife staying away, no definitive employment, monetary issues and poses an open ended question to the client. The rationale of such approach is to make client realize how it has affected his family, social and professional life at the same time asking about his coping strategies reveal the client's desire for change. Therefore, with regard to interviewer strategy to retrieve information and assess to what degree it has affected his client life is appreciable and justified logically.

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LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

The level engagement can be rated as good, but could have been much better if proper space and time would have been facilitated at the start of the session. As discussed, already the client seems to be in a stressed state and the stress amount increased later due to his realizations of effects, a well-balanced therapeutic relationship establishment could have given much better information on his drinking behaviors and the causal factors and risk factors for such behavior (Rush, 2015). While the interview session was short i.e. approximately thirteen minutes it could have been extended for better goal achievement.

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OVERALL RATING

Overall, the session can be concluded as good as some good non-verbal communication skills and verbal skills were demonstrated by the counselor. The exact stress factor and impact information was retrieved by the counselor. Although, the counselor failed at certain events which could have been more fine structured for a client centered session, with the given time constraint it seems a good strategy to conduct an assessment session. The smooth narrative approach helped the counselor conduct the whole interview smoothly.

Commented [A9]: Short and crisp summation.

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Criterion	Levels of achievement		
	Exemplary	**Good**	**Poor**
Writing style and presentation are clear			
• Title	Title is concise and informative so readers can anticipate the contents of the contribution and interested people look forward to reading it.	The title gives a general indication of the material covered in the contribution, but have to read the document to fully appreciate what is covered. Some potential readers may be lost because they can't clearly anticipate the material covered by reading the title.	The linkage between the title and the text is not clear. Reader may skip the contribution because they don't appreciate its relevance.
• Introduction	Introductory statement clearly indicates the main purpose of the contribution and suggests the plan of organization, so the reader can anticipate the text that will follow.	Introductory statement indicates the main purpose of the contribution in general terms, so the reader has some idea of what will follow.	The introduction does not give an overview of the contribution so the readers are not sure what to expect as they read the text.
• Main Body	Main body of contribution makes connected points that clearly build the argument so the text flows from introduction to conclusion in a logical manner, thereby helping the reader to follow the thinking behind the text.	The main body presents a number of points that allow the reader to understand the argument, but lapses in the writing may force the reader to make some connections between the parts.	The text is not well structured so the reader must stop reading at times to try to makes sense of the text.
• Conclusion	The main point of the contribution is clearly indicated and reinforced so the reader can clearly remember it.	The main point of the contribution is indicated, but may be stated in an unconvincing manner.	The concluding section does not reinforce or revisit the main point so the reader is unsure about it and likely to misinterpret or forget it.
• Written expression	Sentences and paragraphs are well structured and clear so the reader can focus on what is written. Each paragraph has a topic sentence that indicates the subject matter.	Minor lapses in sentence structure, such as run-on sentences and unnecessarily complex sentence structures, force the reader to pause and reflect on the meaning of the text. Paragraphs present a complete argument, but may not flow so well.	Many sentences are poorly structured so the reader must stop often to reflect on the meaning of the text. Many paragraphs lack topic sentences or have poor flow so the main points and linkages among explanatory text are not clear.
• Grammar, punctuation and spelling	Grammar, spelling and punctuation are flawless, which allows the reader to focus on the message.	Some minor errors in grammar, spelling and/or punctuation detract from the quality of the text, but do not impair the communication.	Many errors in grammar, spelling and/or punctuation make reading the text difficult and communication is impaired.

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Concepts and arguments are well developed			
• Accuracy	All information is accurately reported using appropriate terminology so the information is reliable.	The information is largely accurate but imprecise language could lead a reader to misinterpret aspects of the text.	Although the gist of the information is correct, there are problems with the interpretation of it. A reader can be misled by the text.
• Relevance	Connections between the contribution and the main topic of the discussion are clearly indicated.	Connections between the contribution and the main topic of the discussion are indicated or implied, but the reader needs to pause to clarify those connections.	Although the text is relevant, this is not clearly indicated, so the reader must guess how the text relates to the main topic.
• Significance	The reason why the contribution is important to the overall discussion is clearly described and discussed so the reader takes the contribution seriously.	The reason why the contribution is important is touched on but not elucidated, so the reader must make some interpretations about the author's view of the contribution's significance.	The contribution may include significant material but this is not indicated, so the reader must guess it.
• Clarity	The main points and new technical terms are clearly described and/or explained so the reader is left with no ambiguity about what was written.	Although the text is clear to informed audiences, unexplained points may leave room for alternative interpretations of the text.	Key points and new technical terms are not explained so the reader is confused.
• Independence	The contribution is completely self-contained so the reader does not have to read other contributions or published materials to understand what was written about.	The text is sufficiently clear that the reader can understand the main point without further reading, but some parts of the text are not clear without consulting earlier contributions or other sources of information.	The text is written in a manner that presumes considerable prior knowledge, so the reader must have a thorough knowledge of what has been written about the subject in order to understand the main point of the contribution.
Contribution is responsive to another contribution	The writer links ideas submitted by others to their own contribution in a manner that substantially strengthens the group's efforts to resolve the main problem. This linkage can include elaboration of what was previously written, a critique or questioning of it, demonstration of linkages among two or more earlier contributions, and/or utilization of an earlier contribution as a foundation to build your own.	The writer makes references to earlier works that are a starting point for new ideas but, apart from the reference to the earlier work, not much information is incorporated	The text mentions other contributions but neither explains the reference nor substantially adds to it, so there is no clear benefit to the resolution of the main problem from citing the earlier contribution.
Text is supported by references			

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• Sources indicated	All information and ideas that are not commonly know are supported with references to sources, so the reader has confidence that the information is not based on hearsay or the writer's opinion or assumptions alone.	Most sources are indicated, but in only a few cases the sources are not given or are ambiguous, so the reader has to check some of the sources.	Sources are cited for some specific parts of the contribution, but no references are supplied for information and ideas that are clearly not the author's, so the reader has no idea of the validity and authority of the information.
• Relevant references	Information, concepts and opinions are supported with references to published literature, especially primary (original) sources of information, rather than review articles or textbooks. This allows the reader to independently review the cited sources. More than one reference is cited to support key points, which adds strength and authority to the argument.	One or a few references are used to support the text. Thus the contribution is supported but this may be an idiosyncratic source. Some general references to textbooks are made that could have been replaced by primary references which are more thorough and authoritative.	Information comes from Web sites or other sources that have no recognized authority, so the validity or strength of the source is unknown.
• Citation style	References cited appropriately in the text, and the correct format is used in the text when citing information, so the reader clearly knows which information is attributable to which source.	Minor lapses in citation format do not prevent the reader from finding the sources in the reference list at the end of the contribution.	Citation format incorrect or poorly placed in the text, so citations distract from reading.
• Bibliographic information	The reference list contains complete bibliographic information (author's name(s), publication date, title, source, date web page accessed), so a reader can easily find the references for their own research. The authority of sources can be evaluated by checking them.	Bibliographic information largely complete, but some information missing so the reader may have difficulty finding some references. Most sources can still be easily checked.	Not all references are listed, information in the reference list is incorrect, or important information is missing from the reference list, so the reader is unable to find the same sources of information and the authority of sources is almost entirely unknown.

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Faculty Comments: The start of the work is quite well-written. Though minor lapses in sentence construction and stating the same in unconvincing manner does affect the quality of work. Little efforts in this area would help improve the quality of overall assignment.

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