

## **Abstract: Motivational Interviewing & Engaging the Acute Psychiatric Inpatient**

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to teach nursing staff counseling skills that would expedite the development of rapport with psychiatric patients.

**Background:** Given the current short length of patient stays, it is important that nursing staff engage patients quickly in their treatment. A review of the literature indicated that Motivational Interviewing would be most effective.

**Method:** A plan was developed for twelve weeks of classes with a variety of teaching modalities: reading, video, homework assignments, and role-playing. The participants were nursing staff from the department of psychiatry at SFGH. Before classes started, I assessed the participants' knowledge of MI, and found that no one had any previous training in it. The project was evaluated through interviews with the participants and field notes.

**Results:** The results were that out of eight participants three became knowledgeable about MI, two went on vacation in the middle of the class series and subsequently forgot most of what they learned, one dropped out due to time constraints, one refused to attend class but later reported that she was reading the text on her own, one couldn't attend due to time conflicts but has been studying independently.

**Discussion:** Of those that mastered the techniques all felt they were effective way to engage patients. The main barriers identified to learning MI were the lack of time available to attend class and frequent interruptions on the unit where the class was taking place. Initially there was pessimism about the applicability of these techniques to our clientele, but over time as the staff came to see the method as having potential; most have voiced a desire to continue learning MI. Nevertheless, the main barrier to using MI cited by staff was the patients' low functioning level. The class format received positive evaluations, but staff found it difficult to find time to attend due to acuity on their units. One of the limitations of this project is that it couldn't evaluate the effectiveness of MI for the patient. This would have required that staff already have a thorough knowledge of MI techniques and this was not the case.

**Conclusions:** Given the staff with the most initial interest in MI had better results learning and using it, I recommend that future education in MI focus on those who demonstrate an interest. Because of the difficulty in finding time for nursing staff to attend a class, I am currently working on creating a self-study module. This will include reading, video, weekly skills building exercises, and follow up by myself to check on progress or problems. I hope to be able to offer free CEUs, as this will be a motivating factor for people.

**Key words:** psychiatry, motivational-interviewing, evidence-base