

Using Graphic Novels when Choosing Treatment for Alcohol Use Disorder

Principal investigator

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Organization

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What was the research about?

Medicines designed to treat alcohol use disorder may help patients stop drinking. But few patients use these medicines.

In this study, the research team designed a set of graphic novels to help counselors and patients who are deciding whether to use medicine for alcohol use disorder. Graphic novels are made in the style of comic books. The novels talked about what to expect in alcohol use disorder treatment. Each novel showed conversations between patients and counselors about recovery and making decisions about treatment and medicine. Counselors led four structured sessions with patients on the graphic novel topics over four to six weeks.

The research team compared patients who used the graphic novels and patients who received usual care. The team wanted to learn if the novels were useful in making decisions about treatment. They also got feedback on the graphic novels from counselors and patients who used them.

What were the results?

The study wasn't large enough to say for sure if using the graphic novels to help make decisions about alcohol use disorder treatment worked better than usual care. Patients who used the graphic novels and patients who received usual care didn't differ in

- How often counselors asked them about using medicine for alcohol use disorder

- How satisfied they were with their treatment sessions
- How often they used drugs or alcohol

More patients who received usual care said they followed up on getting medicine for treatment than patients who used the graphic novels.

In group discussions, counselors and patients who used the graphic novels had neutral or positive views on the materials and said they were useful for starting conversations about treatment.

Who was in the study?

The study included 37 patients with alcohol use disorder. Of these, 70 percent were African American, 14 percent were white, and 16 percent were other races. The average age was 43, and 65 percent were men. All patients received treatment at a medical center in Philadelphia.

What did the research team do?

The research team assigned counselors by chance to use the graphic novels or provide usual care. In the graphic novel group, the team trained counselors on how to use the novels.

In the usual care group, counselors received training on the same topics but didn't use the novels. They also led four sessions over four to six weeks. These counselors had more flexibility to decide which topics to focus on and when.

Patients completed surveys before the study began and again 6 and 12 weeks later. The research team led group discussions with counselors and patients to get feedback on using the graphic novels. The counselor groups took place at week six. The patient groups took place at week 12.

Addiction counselors, patients, and patient advocates helped design the graphic novels and provided input throughout the study.

What were the limits of the study?

The study took place at one medical center. Results may differ in other places.

Future research could test the graphic novels with a larger group of patients to know how well the novels work.

How can people use the results?

Patients with alcohol use disorder and their counselors could consider the results when discussing treatment choices. But more research is needed to say how well the graphic novels help patients make decisions about medicine.

To learn more about this project, visit www.pcori.org/Brooks259.